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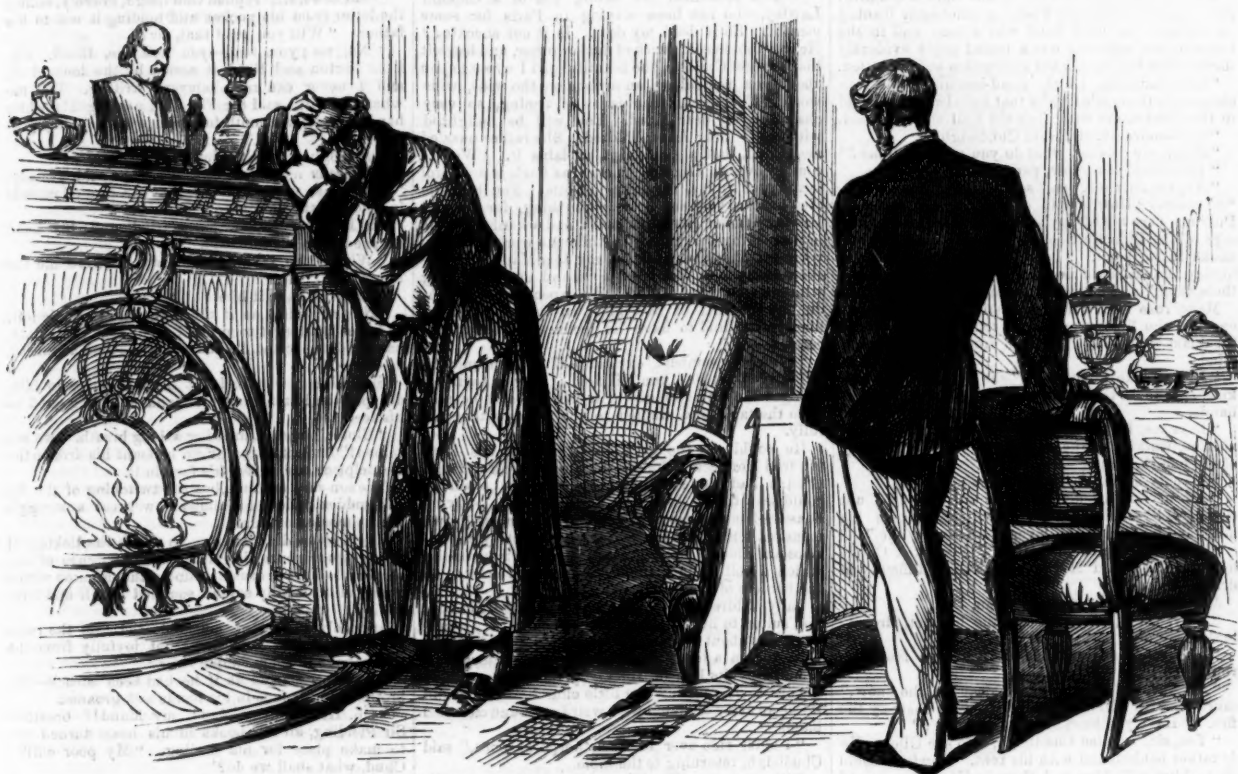
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[AMONG THE BREAKERS.]

MAURICE DURANT.

CHAPTER I.

Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good;
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.

Wordsworth.

WHAT need is there to describe Grassmere? Who does not know it, with its half-dozen rustic houses, handful of farms, irregular cluster of cottages, old, time-eaten church, rotting pillory and rusty stocks; its bright, silver stream, tall, regal trees, green-robed valleys, and heather-covered hills; and, lastly, its ancient, stately Hall and moss-grown Rectory?

Our English rural villages are very much alike, and between Grassmere and any other of the thousand and one English hamlets there was but little or no difference. Perhaps it might boast—for every village, no matter how small, boasts of something—of its old Hall and of the ancient blood of the people who held it, and in doing so it would not be vaunting without cause, for Chichester Hall was a noble pile, honoured by age and a perfect halo of historic memories.

Artists travelled far and from all corners of the civilized world to gaze ecstatically upon its antique beauties and transfer its left wing, right wing, and its noble facade to their bulky sketch books. The greatest poet of the day had visited it and made it the scene of one of his greatest songs; and antiquarians, when discussing its age, beauties, and history, were wont to grow eloquent and declare that it was the parast specimen of old English mansions.

With all this to back them the Grassmerians may be excused in looking upon their Hall as the greatest piece of glory in brick and stone under the sun.

The present owner of the Hall, Sir Fielding Chichester, was as proud of the majestic pile as the villagers who dwelt outside its gates. He loved every inch of it, from vasty cellar to carved chimney-stack, and could have told, had he chosen to do so, its whole history, from the day when Luke Chichester laid the huge foundation stone with his own hands—

which were scarcely cleansed of the blood spent in the late wars of King Charles the Unfortunate—to the present time, when its grim walls and corridors were lightened by crimson damask and statuary, and the sunlight of peaceful happiness shone through its stained windows.

But Sir Fielding Chichester would not have chosen to have told it, for he spoke but little, and then only of his books, for Sir Fielding lived and had his being only in the spacious, gold-domed library of the Hall. There you could find him almost the whole day through, and very often all night. There, between four high book-lined walls, the owner of a vast and beautiful estate, the possessor of an ancient name and an enormous county influence, and father of a handsome, noble-hearted son and lovely daughter, spent his life. It was his world; in no other air save that filled with the odour of Russia leather and time-stained parchment could he breathe freely. In nothing but the absolute silence of the vast library, with its double doors and thickly painted windows, could he be at ease, and in no friend—not even in his beloved children—could he find that comfort and companionship which the silent record of the mighty dead opened up to him.

Yet let not our readers misunderstand the man. He was no mere bookworm, blindly creeping through the mountain of knowledge; no shrunken student in soot-stained and neglected attire. No, these almost inevitable consequences of such a life in another man were averted in Sir Fielding Chichester by the old blue blood which kept him, no matter what, in habits a perfect gentleman, even to the tying of his cravat.

Slightly bent, yet still looking tall, with pale face and clear-cut features, keen, bright eyes and lofty forehead, small handed and footed, he could have held his head up in point of aristocratic appearance even with the Charles Chichester whose kingly form shone down from its gilt frame in the picture gallery outside his library door.

With such ancestors it was little wonder that Chudleigh Chichester should be both distinguished-looking and handsome. He was of rather larger build than Sir

Fielding, with fair hair and dark eyes. That there was a look of firmness about the lower part of his face, and an air of thoughtful determination upon the white forehead were matters of congratulation, considering that the whole care of the estates fell upon his broad shoulders.

Everything was left to Chudleigh, and had been since he was of an age to understand the steward's books and the nature of a landlord's duties.

He was now twenty-three years old, though looking younger, being fair, good looking, as we have said, and heart-free, save for the affection he bore his father, and the great love he poured out on his sister Maud, the belle of the county and the object of Grassmere's adoration.

We have experienced comparatively little difficulty in describing one small portion of the Chichester family, but as our pen writes "Maud" it falters and stops motionless and powerless to describe the vision of beautiful purity which memory calls up. If we may say that her face was a perfect oval, her eyes dark, deep, and as clear and fine as the dew upon a rose, her mouth perfect and bud-like, and her hair a marvellous shower of silken light, how nearer are we to producing sweet Maud Chichester than when we had merely written her musical name?

Maud was nineteen, but as unlike the usual run of girls at that age as it was possible for her to be. Perfectly free from affectation, for she had no female friend to teach it her, without an ounce of vanity, she was as open, as pure, and as noble-minded as any young girl of blue blood brought up under such circumstances could be.

See her as she enters the breakfast-room one November morning, clad in a dark morning dress of a deep, rich colour, that serves as a foil to her fresh young beauty, her hair brushed from her fair white forehead, and her eyes sparkling with affection as she crosses to the fireplace, against which the tall form of her brother Chudleigh is leaning.

"Up already, Maud!" he exclaimed, taking her in his arms and lifting her up—unnecessarily—for a kiss. "I did not expect you for another half-hour."

"Well, don't look so disappointed, or I will go to bed again," she retorted, with a pout. "Is papa down yet?"

"Yes, in the library," replied Chudleigh. "I have sent to tell him the coffee is on the table, but—"

"I will go," said Maud, and with a light step hurried from the room.

Chudleigh looked after her with a sigh and a sudden cloud across the brow, then resumed the old attitude—a somewhat despondent one—at the fire.

"Dear Maud, dear Maud," he muttered, "poor Maud—high-ho!"

In a few moments the door opened and the beautiful girl re-entered with Sir Fielding Chichester leaning on her arm. In each hand was a book and in the breast of his waistcoat was a folded paper evidently thrust there in a moment of abstraction and forgotten.

"Good-morning, Chud, good-morning," he exclaimed, in the musical voice that had always belonged to the Chichesters with their old Hall and old blood.

"Good-morning, sir," said Chudleigh.

"Maud, my darling, what do you want with me?"

"Breakfast, you know, papa—"

"Ah, ah, dear me, yes," softly replied the baronet, "of course. How stupid of me. I had forgotten. Dear me, here are 'Pliny's Letters' and the last 'Essays of the Didactic Society,' and he looked at the books in his hand. "I—I brought them from the library. Excuse me a moment, Chudleigh, while I take them back," and he moved towards the door.

Maud rose from her seat hastily—she knew that once in the library again all remembrance of the breakfast would have vanished from Sir Fielding's mind.

"Let me take them, papa," she said, and with a kiss she took them from Sir Fielding's reluctant hands.

"Dear me, I had no idea it was snowing," he remarked, walking to the window. "What's the day of the month, Chud?"

"Twenty-sixth, sir," said Chudleigh.

"Twenty-sixth and the 'Scientific Review' not come yet!" exclaimed Sir Fielding, shaking his head, and adding, softly, "very late—very late."

"The post has not come in yet," remarked Chudleigh. "I'm afraid Markham has some difficulty in driving."

Markham was the rural postman.

"Why, Chud, why?" asked the baronet, dreamingly.

"The roads are so thick with snow—a foot deep round the hollow."

"Ah, yes, the snow, dear me, dear me, the snow," murmured Sir Fielding, sinking into his chair by the fire. "Have you been out this morning?"

"Yes, sir," replied Chudleigh, "to see Giles. He is rather behindhand with his rent. Where could do nothing with him, so I thought I'd walk over and see into it."

"Dear me," said the baronet, with perfect indifference, "and what does he say, Chud, what does he say?"

"The usual story. Everything gone wrong, crops short, the hay queer, mouth disease, and—oh, every mishap under the sun of course. I was going to ask you what I am to do."

"My dear Chud, what is the use of asking me?" exclaimed the baronet, with mild surprise, "for you know I never interfere in any way with anything. I assure you I didn't even know that Giles was in arrears. I leave it to you, Chud, I leave it to you."

And the father wheeled his chair round towards the table with the air of having washed his hands of the subject.

The son sighed and his brows wrinkled as he looked at the serene face.

For a moment he was silent, then, drawing his chair towards the table, he balanced his knife thoughtfully, and with his face still troubled said:

"You know how sorry I always am to trouble you on business matters, sir, but I'm afraid I must ask you to go over a few things with me after breakfast."

"Yes, yes, after breakfast, dear Chud, after breakfast," repeated Sir Fielding, catching eagerly at the postponement.

The next moment the door opened and Maud re-entered with the letter-bag in her hand.

"Here's the post at last, Chud," she said. "Now, papa, let me see. Here are the papers, your beloved 'Quarterly,' 'The Didactic Report,' and a catalogue from Northern's. Those for you, Chud, here are your letters, and what do you think?—one from Aunt Mildred for me."

Chudleigh looked up with a smile, but not a very interested air, for he had already commenced the perusal of a pile of blue official-looking envelopes, and the baronet took no notice whatever, for he was lost in the contents of the "Quarterly."

For a few minutes there was silence, broken only by the trickling of the coffee into the cups and the

occasional play of Chudleigh's knife and fork, but suddenly Maud looked up with a pleased smile upon her beautiful face, and said:

"Papa, Chud, what do you think?"

Chud threw down his letters at once and looked up all attention.

"Nothing. What do you?"

"Aunt Mildred's coming here and going to bring some one with her."

"Bring some one with her? Who?" asked Chud.

"A companion," answered Maud. "Oh, how delightful. Listen, it's quite romantic:

"You remember me telling you of a Captain Lawley, who has been staying in Paris for some months. He is dead, my dear. Is it not shocking? He was shot in some wicked duel or other, and has left his daughter Carlotta, the beautiful girl I wrote to you about you remember, an orphan on the wide, wide world. Poor girl. She is so charming, so very charming, my dear Maud. You will be delighted with her. Dear Aunt Mildred. She rather puzzled me, Chud, but a postscript explains it. 'We are coming over to England at once, as Paris is a painful locality, of course, for dear Carlotta. You have no idea how bravely she bears everything, for Captain Lawley left her penniless, and I had a hard struggle in persuading her from going into the world as a governess. Dreadful, is it not, my dear Maud? However, everything is settled now, and she is coming with me as my companion. We expect to reach London by the first of December, so that if you will kindly ask Chud to have the goodness to see to the cottage—'

"First of December!" exclaimed Chudleigh, quickly. "Phew! Just like Aunt Mildred. How on earth am I to get the cottage ready in a week?" and he rose from the table and walked to the window thoughtfully.

He could see the little cottage which his Aunt Mildred had occupied since her husband, Sir Wilford Gordon, had died; indeed from where he stood he could scan the whole village and most of the outlying houses—from the deserted Rectory, an old rose-grown mansion, tenantless for years, with a history mysterious and gloomy, to the great red-bricked monastery which a self-made Manchester man had erected on the borders of the Chichester Park.

Lady Mildred's cottage, a pretty, rustic little box, just suited to her means, which were not very abundant, was about a quarter of an hour's walk from the Hall, and on a level with the dreary Rectory surrounded by its belt of thickly planted trees, which seemed to overshadow the little church and all round it like an army of giants with weird arms and cloaked hands.

"I must ride over to Armethorpe at once," said Chudleigh, returning to the table.

"Oh, yes, do, Chud," exclaimed Maud. "We must have the cottage ready for Aunt Mildred. Isn't it delightful, a companion, and such a charming one? I am sure I shall like her if she is anything half so nice as aunt describes her. Poor girl. Think, papa! her father killed in a duel and she left in a strange country without any money or friends excepting aunt. Oh, my heart is wrung for her! If she will let me, I will love her—that I will. Chud, you will make the cottage very nice, will you not?—very nice! Oh, Chud, let me come over to Armethorpe with you; I can help you—oh, I'm sure I can. I can choose different things, and—Oh, Chud, what is the matter?"

For Chud, who had been reading a letter in his hand, had suddenly started to his feet with an exclamation, whether of surprise or anxiety it was difficult to say.

"Eh, what's the matter, Chud?" asked Sir Fielding, glancing up from his "Quarterly." "What's the matter?"

"N—nothing, sir," said Chudleigh, sitting down again and placing the letter in his pocket. "Now, Maud, you want to go with me to Armethorpe, so you shall go and get ready. I don't see how the cottage is to be prepared in time for Lady Mildred. Let me see—the twenty-sixth—no, I don't think it can be done."

"Then," said Maud, eagerly, "let us have them here, papa."

"Of course, if your aunt will come, my dear," said Sir Fielding. "Of course, of course."

"I will write at once," said Maud. "Now, Chud, you need not be in such a hurry about the cottage, the longer the better. Another cup of coffee before I go, papa. Chud—"

"No more, my darling," said Sir Fielding, and Chud had risen and walked to the window again.

So, holding the welcome letter in her hand, the beautiful girl ran from the room.

Chudleigh walked to the door, and held the handle. Sir Fielding looked up and actually shuffled in his chair.

"Well, Chud," he commenced, thinking it best to make a virtue of necessity, "you want to go over

something with me, eh? I don't know what for I am sure, for if it's anything of a muddle it will be twenty times more muddled if I have anything to do with it. Figures, my dear Chud, were never my forte—never," and the baronet shook his head with mild emphasis.

His son came up to his chair, and leaning over him put his hand upon his shoulder.

The baronet looked up with apprehensive astonishment, for Chudleigh was not usually demonstrative, and there was a meaning in his half-caressing grasp.

"What is it, Chud?" he said.

"Bad news, sir," replied Chudleigh, gravely, taking the letter from his pocket and holding it out to his father. "Will you read that, sir?"

"No, no; you read—you tell me, Chud. Oh, from Norton and Read it seems by the look of it, and I never can read lawyers' writing. Tell me what is in it," said Sir Fielding, passing his white hand across his smooth forehead with a weary gesture.

Chudleigh opened the letter.

"There is not much to tell, sir," he said, gravely. "Norton has received notice that Mr. Hassell intends foreclosing the mortgage."

Sir Fielding Chichester started and his hand dropped from his forehead.

"What!" he said, breathlessly. "Give me the letter."

Chudleigh gave it him.

"Norton writes as if there were no loophole left, and does not forget to remind you that the estate, having deteriorated, is not worth the sum advanced. I—I—"

Sir Fielding, who had not been listening to him, dropped the letter from his hand, and staggered to his feet.

"Chud!" he said, drawing a long breath, "we are ruined!" and uttering a groan he leant his arm on the mantelpiece and buried his face in it.

The son said nothing, but the twitching of the lip and sudden pallor proclaimed how great a struggle the calmness cost him.

There was a dead silence, in which the ticking of the antique bronze timepiece with its figure of the inexorable Father crushing down the minutes with a sweep of his deadly scythe, sounded harsh and foreboding.

Suddenly a burst of music floated into the room and a girl's clear voice rang out joyfully from the room above in some simple ballad.

The father started as if he had been struck—the brother hid his face in his hands and groaned.

"Oh, Heaven—my Maud, my Maud!" breathed Sir Fielding, all the books in his heart turned out to make place for his darling. "My poor child! Chud, what shall we do?"

"Ay, what shall we do? That is the question," said Chudleigh, catching eagerly at the escape from the dread apathetic despair and drawing himself up to his full height. "Bear up, sir; all is not lost yet. Surely there is some one—"

Sir Fielding raised his head, startling Chudleigh at sight of his face, which looked ten years older than when he had seen it last.

"Some one! ay, but where? No, no, Chud; I have no friends now. I have been living out of the world for nearly twenty years. Once," and he walked to the window, Chudleigh following him—"once," raising his hand and pointing it for a second at the tall, crumbling chimneys of the Rectory, "there would have been refuge, for so Durant ever closed his hand against a Chichester, nor a Chichester ever denied a Durant. But," and he sighed with a world of mournfulness, "where is a Durant now? No, Chudleigh, that was our only chance; but you know how utterly that is lost to us."

And once more the baronet, gazing at the deserted house, sighed sorrowfully and with utter hopelessness.

CHAPTER II.

Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye, in every gesture dignity and love.

The first of December had arrived, and with it Lady Mildred, covered in furs, and accompanied by her friend and companion, Carlotta Lawley.

Chudleigh had been compelled to go to town the preceding day to see the family solicitor, and had not returned when her ladyship arrived, so that Sir Fielding and Maud did the honours of the house—Maud with some little shyness and reserve, for Miss Lawley had taken her by surprise. She had expected to see a beautiful and accomplished girl from her aunt's purposely obscure description, but the portrait her imagination had drawn fell so far short of her reality that she was startled and surprised.

To say that Carlotta Lawley was beautiful was to assert but little. She was more proud and more bewitching than charming. Taller than Maud, a brilliant brunette, with dark, piercing eyes that shone like

a jewel, or a gipsy's—a graceful form, almost queenly in its bearing, and a mouth that rivalled Cleopatra's in its coral-like curves and fulness—she was indeed what the best Parisian judges of woman's looks had called her—superb.

Beside Maud's fresh, fair loveliness, her beauty shone to its greatest advantage, and Sir Fielding, who came from his dream-world with all the Chichester courtliness to welcome her, muttered a half-audible note of admiration, which it was well for Carlotta's vanity did not reach her ear.

She was very quiet, naturally, thought Maud, but expressed her admiration of the grand old-house with such fervour as to win Sir Fielding's and Maud's love immediately.

Said Maud, stopping before an open door through which a small sitting-room could be seen:

"These rooms are Chudleigh's. Oh, I forgot to tell you," she exclaimed, in answer to the look of interrogation on Carlotta's face. "Chudleigh is my brother. He is so good—so kind. We all of us lean on him. Papa is—very busy in the library, you know, always, and everything is left to Chud. And everything fares well too. Oh, you must like Chudleigh."

"I am sure I shall if he resembles you in the slightest," murmured Carlotta, kissing her again.

"He went to London on business yesterday, but he will be back to dinner, I hope. You must let him take you all over the Hall, I mean in the closed-up rooms you know. He can tell you the history of every room."

"If he will take so much trouble I shall only be too grateful," said Carlotta. "I am fond of old houses and their histories."

"And now you must come and see my room," she said, winding her arm round her new friend's waist, and leading her into the little rose-coloured boudoir and bed-chamber, which was honoured by the title "Miss Maud's." "Do you like them? If you do you shall have them while you stay. And I wish that might be for ever."

"Do you?" said Carlotta, leaning down with a sudden moisture in her dark eyes, her voice ringing tremulously musical—more musical than Maud had ever heard or thought it possible for a voice to be. "So do I! How very kind you are! You must forgive me if I seem somewhat cold; until I knew Lady Mildred I never experienced such goodness."

And the lips quivered slightly, although the eyes lit up with a mournful smile.

Maud drew her closer to her.

"You must not say such things; I am not kind. It seems so ridiculous to hear you say that to me. And she laughed merrily as she glanced at the grand beauty of the other, against which she looked so fresh and childlike. "It's you who must be good to me. You will try and love me, won't you? I love you already."

Again the dark eyes filled with tears, but the lips said nothing as she stooped to kiss her.

"And now you must rest after your journey. See, I will make up the fire and cover you up with these furs. Then, while I go and see whether Aunt Mildred is comfortable, you can have a quiet sleep."

Carlotta laughed aloud, musical laugh.

"Sleep!" she said. "I could not. I am not tired. You do not know how much I have travelled in my short life, or you would not think me worn out by a short trip from Paris. I once journeyed from Siberia, night and day, and had but six hours' sleep the whole time."

Maud gazed at her with rigid awe.

"Siberia! Oh, dear me! what a great deal you will have to tell me!" she said, with a quiet delight, but added, suddenly, "but perhaps you won't tell me?"

"Yes, I will tell you everything," replied Carlotta, "nearly everything."

Meanwhile Lady Mildred—a good-natured lady, loved and respected by all, who bore about her the Chichester characteristics in features and manner—was narrating to her brother the history—or, rather, what little she knew of it—of Carlotta and her father, Captain Lawley.

Womanlike, she, of course, commenced the conversation by asking Sir Fielding what he thought of her new companion.

"She is majestic," he said, "Oriental in her beauty. What a woman her mother must have been! Who was she?"

"No one knows," said Lady Mildred. "Captain Lawley had been a widower for years, so it is said. He was a strange man, Fielding, such a very strange man—very handsome, Carlotta has her father's eyes and his hair too."

"What was he?" said Sir Fielding.

"Ah, that too no one knows. He had travelled a great deal. He had been to—oh, I don't know where—every country you can mention. He could speak every language on the face of the earth, I think. I have heard of a soldier an Arab who used to bring us flowers in Paris in pure Arabic."

"Eh, how do you know it was pure?" asked Mr. Fielding, with a quiet smile, not half attending to her.

"Oh—ahem!—how absurd, Fielding! How do I know it was pure? Why, how could the man have understood him if it hadn't been? Ah, he was a strange character! So gentlemanly, he looked a lord; but—well, very wild, I think. There were stories about a Russian princess, an escapee at court, and a dismissal; but people will talk, you know, and tell such stories too. Anyway, everybody said that something had happened in some court or other, and that Captain Lawley was a ruined man. I never will believe he was an adventurer. No one who could bow as he did could be an adventurer."

"Ahem!" said Sir Fielding. "And what about the duel?"

"Ah, was not that sad?" said Lady Mildred, throwing up her hands. "Ah, it was dreadful! I don't know what it was about—never could find out. Some said that it was a gambling affair; but there again, you see, reports are so untrue. Poor Captain Lawley! I am sure I was as grieved as if he'd been my own brother when they told me that he was shot through the breast—through the heart, Fielding—think of that!"

"And this poor girl is utterly penniless," said Sir Fielding, "eh, utterly penniless, didn't you say? I heard it from Chud, I think."

"Haven't a penny in the world. Shocking, is it not, with such doubtful antecedents and no fortune? Poor Carlotta!"

Then the conversation ended by Sir Fielding getting up in an abstracted manner and walking dreamily out of the room, of course in the direction of the library. Lady Mildred, who was too used to her brother's queer ways to be offended, then sought her dressing-room.

Two hours afterwards the four met in the oaken dining-room.

Chudleigh had not arrived, and Sir Fielding, as he stood at the head of the table, pulled out his watch with an anxious look.

"Chudleigh is late," he said. "Had he any commission from you, Maud?"

"No," said Maud, from where she was sitting beside Carlotta, who was dressed in deep mourning, that set off her clear skin to perfection. "No; he said he should not have time to do more than buy some books for you at Chester's, papa."

"Ah, ah," said Sir Fielding, sighing, "I'm afraid he hasn't been able to get the books. They were very scarce. An old copy of *Marcus Aurelius*, and a marginal *Ovid*, my dear Miss Lawley, a marginal *Ovid*!"

"That must be very scarce," said Carlotta, quietly. "I have only seen one, and that was at Lorenzo Bardolph's."

"Eh," exclaimed Sir Fielding, eagerly. "Have you been over Lorenzo's library?"

"Yes," she said, simply. "I have spent days there."

"Dear me, dear me," said Sir Fielding, forgetting the soup which had just been brought in, and Lady Mildred's plate which was being held beside him.

"I envy you, I envy you. Lorenzo Bardolph's library, and you saw the *Ovid*! Perhaps you saw that old tractate of Gregory's. I heard he had a copy."

"My dear Carlotta, don't say a word more," interrupted Lady Mildred, "or I shall never get any soup."

Maud laughed.

"Soup! Dear me, yes," said Sir Fielding.

"You will tell me about Lorenzo's after dinner, will you not, Miss Lawley? After dinner! Yes, yes."

Before Carlotta's "Yes" had died upon her lips the door opened and Chudleigh entered. He started at seeing the beautiful girl at his sister's side; for, like every one else, her almost supernatural loveliness took him by surprise. And she, Carlotta, was, on her side, somewhat startled, for, from Maud's description, she had drawn for herself the picture of a little, undersized man, rather poor looking, very business-like, and wholly unprepossessing. Whereas Chudleigh Chichester, as he stood in evening dress, with the glow of exercise upon his handsome face, looked none of these.

Sir Fielding looked up anxiously, trying to read, if he could, his tidings from his face. Then, discovering nothing and smothering a sigh, he introduced him to Carlotta, Maud making room for her brother between them.

"I didn't hear you come in, Chud," said Sir Fielding.

"I walked up the avenue," said Chud. Then turning to Carlotta he added: "You have had a cold and wearisome journey?"

"A little," she said, answering the kindly regard of his great, honest eyes, in which still lingered a touch of his first admiring surprise—"a little; we were well wrapped up, were we not, Lady Mildred?"

"Yes, my dear," said Lady Mildred, "and well taken care of too, for a gentleman, very good looking, was exceedingly attentive, and insisted on converting Carlotta and myself into respectable mummies with waterproofs and shawls, besides bringing us hot soup and coffee every five minutes. Of course Martha was too ill to move."

Martha was Lady Mildred's maid.

"A right courteous gentleman. Do you know his name?"

"We did hear it, but I have forgotten it," said her ladyship. "Do you remember, Carlotta?"

"No, I do not. I heard some one address him as the Honourable Mr. something, and that was all. He was very kind."

Chudleigh looked round from his soup at the pale, grand face, and wondered how under the circumstances any one could be otherwise.

"Let me send you some snipe, Miss Lawley," said Sir Fielding, glancing at her empty plate.

But she declined.

"You are eating nothing," said Maud, with loving reproach.

"You are tired," said Chudleigh; "let me give you some wine," and he poured out a glass of port.

"I do not wonder at her being worn out. It was very wrong, was it not?" said Maud.

"Carlotta is very young," said Lady Mildred, "and can afford to be extravagant with her energy. When she gets to my age—"

"My dear Mildred," expostulated Sir Fielding, in so comically courteous a tone that all laughed, even Carlotta; and Chudleigh, in whose ears her voice had been ringing since she had first spoken, drank in the low, rippling laughter as one listening to some marvellous music.

A spell seemed to fall over him when she spoke, and towards the close of the dinner he was startled to find himself setting traps to catch her speech, and listening with rapt attention to her low replies.

"Now Chud and I will have one little bottle," said Sir Fielding, "and then join you in the drawing-room. I must send you to bed early to-night, Miss Lawley, but after to-day you shall do as you like. Chichester Hall is Liberty Hall—oh, Aunt Mildred? Liberty Hall, eh?" and the old baronet rubbed his white hands agreeably. "Now, Chud, what of the night," he said, anxiously, as soon as the door had closed on the ladies and the old butler had disappeared.

"Black, sir," he said. "Norton says that for the present nothing can be done, but he is keeping a careful look-out for a fresh mortgage, although he fears the estate must be sold."

Sir Fielding groaned.

"My poor Chud!" he said. "This is hard for you—very hard."

Chudleigh smiled bravely.

"I can bear it, sir," he said; then, with a touch of pride: "We Chichesters, sir, are not used to give in easily. I am not an idiot, I hope, and can make my way. As for Maud—there is her mother's fortune."

"A mere pittance, Chud, a mere pittance," said Sir Fielding, in a dry voice.

"Five hundred a year, sir," replied Chud, suppressing a sigh and speaking cheerily. "Five hundred a year is not to be lamented over."

Sir Fielding sighed deeply, and his eyes filled with tears.

Maud Chichester with five hundred a year, and the heir to Chichester Hall working for his daily bread!" he breathed.

"A million others, more deserving men, do, sir," said Chudleigh, eagerly, his face flushing and his hand unconsciously clasping the thin claret glass until the stem snapped. Then he continued, more quietly and with great feeling: "Think of yourself, sir; you will suffer most. You are not young, not strong, sir, as we are. Your book—"

Sir Fielding winced.

"Think of myself," he said, in a tone of self-reproach and with a twitching of the lips. "I have been thinking of myself too long, Chud. I might have repaired the hole in the wall if I had buckled to it in earnest. The estate is a large one, and, like a mine, would pay well if it were properly worked. I might at least have made the old Hall safe for you, Chud; but I have been living a dream-life all these years, shut up like an anchorite between four walls of books—and, oh, Chud, Chud! I though I know it is selfish, I feel the coming loss of my books almost as much as anything."

And the poor man, so great a student of the great past, so ignorant a novice of the present, bent his face in his hands and groaned again.

Chudleigh's eyes burnt and he felt shaking, but he looked positively stern as, struggling with might and main to suppress his emotion, he said:

"Bear up, sir, for Heaven's sake, bear up. We will save the books at all cost. Come, sir, to the draw-

ing-room. Of course the women must not know a word of this."

"Not a word," said Sir Fielding, and, taking the strong arm held out to him, father and son walked into the drawing-room.

(To be continued.)

WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

CHAPTER XLIX.

A sudden thrill of terror shot through Maggie's heart at the sight of the young peer's face, for it was getting to be a very wicked and unpleasant face to look upon; but she met him boldly, her brown eyes steady, and serene.

"Good-afternoon, my lord!" she said, quietly slipping the wonderful paper into the pocket of her dress, and making a demure little courtesy. "I beg your pardon, but Mrs. Keith is in the habit of receiving visitors through the front entrance, and not by way of her bed-room windows."

The young man flushed hotly. The girl's cool insolence angered him.

"I am here to see you, your stubborn little beauty," he said, "not Mrs. Keith, and, as I saw you at this window as I came up, I ventured upon the terrace. You must blame yourself, not me, for the impertinence—your beauty draws me like a magnet; I can't help but follow you. Don't you see—you left me in Northumberland a week or two ago, and here I am! You can't escape me; if you were to fly to the other end of the world I should follow."

Maggie broke into an amused laugh despite her indignation.

"Really, Lord Strathspey," she said, "I did not think you were so silly. Will you oblige me by leaving this window? I am not in the habit of having gentlemen hanging round my windows, and I'm quite sure my father and aunt would be surprised—to use a mild term—if they should return and find you here."

"That doesn't signify," he replied, with his evil, insulting smile. "If you'll admit me at the front entrance, and give me your company for an hour or two, I'll go down—will you?"

"No, sir!"

"Then I shall remain here. I've come all the way from England to have a talk with you, and I will."

"I've but one word for you, my lord, and that's quickly spoken. Good-afternoon."

She was sweeping from the room with the air of a queen, but with one agile spring he cleared the open window, and grasped her arm like a vice.

Maggie confronted him with blazing eyes.

"How dare you, sir?" she cried; "you shall be sorry for this! Let me go this instant, I command you."

But he only laughed in her face, tightening his hold upon her arm till she could have cried out with pain.

"On one condition," he replied, with provoking calmness, "promise that you will be my wife!"

"Your wife!" she cried, carried away by her passion—"you, a usurper, a nameless pretender, to ask me to be your wife! How dare you?"

"What do you mean," he asked, a savage light blazing up in his eyes.

"I mean that you are a brute, a coward," continued the girl, half frantic with impotent rage, and vainly struggling to free her arm from his grasp, "that you are not Lord Strathspey's son."

"'Tis false!" he hissed; "I am his son, and heir to the earldom—there is no proof—"

"There is proof," cried Maggie, lost to all reason and caution in her excitement, "ample proof—and I have it in my possession; you are not the earl's son!"

A look of deadly determination settled on his face.

"That does not matter," he replied, "I shall be his heir all the same; and when you are my wife you will not prate and babble of what you know. Once more will you marry me in peace, and share my wealth and honours?"

She tore herself free by a sudden and superhuman effort, and retreated to the other side of the room.

"No," she cried, facing him in her passionate young beauty, her eyes on fire, her pearl-fair cheeks ablaze, the shining bronze hair tumbling to her waist like a golden torrent, "a thousand times no! I would die first!"

"Very well. We'll see!"

He caught her again in his steel-like grasp, and held her while he drew a small vial from his pocket.

"I've other jobs on hand, and this one might as well be done at once," he muttered.

Maggie uttered a piercing cry for help, which rang out awfully upon the summer silence; but the Scotch cook, clattering her pans on the basement below, did not hear; neither did the footman who

was taking a nap in the grape arbour; and the two maids, taking advantage of the absence of their master and mistress, had run out for a gossip. There was no response to poor Maggie's cry.

The young peer drew the cork from his vial, and, holding her beautiful head back by brute force, he put the vial to her nostrils, and held it there. In less than five minutes she lay quiet in his grasp, her eyes closed, her cheeks colourless, her hands hanging limp and nerveless beside her. He broke into a chuckle of exultation, and, taking her in his arms, leaped lightly through the open window, and descended from the terrace to the grounds in the rear of the house. Just below stood a light vehicle, with one handsome horse attached to it. In two minutes he was in it, and Maggie was lying on the floor with her uncovered head on the seat.

"A denuded bold thing to do in open daylight," he muttered as he grasped the reins. "I had no thought of such a thing, but she drove me to it with her sharp tongue; I'm pretty sure of running into a scrape, but the spice of the thing is the danger—so here goes!"

And giving his fine horse a sharp lash, he shot off down the lonely mountain road.

At the very same hour, just as the summer sun was going down, and the distant peaks of the Scottish mountains were in a glitter of reflected glory, and all the purple twilight musical with rural melody, Captain Forsythe guided his dainty ponies along an unfrequented lane, beneath the arching boughs of a whispering fir forest. His handsome brown eyes were very grave and tender, and he was leaning towards his lovely companion and speaking in a low and earnest voice.

"It is all settled, then," he was saying—"settled and irrevocable, Lady Marguerite?"

"It is all settled," she replied, with sorrow in her sweet voice, despair in her lovely eyes, "and as irrevocable as fate. The wedding trousseau has been ordered, the wedding-day appointed—in November I am to marry him."

"And, Lady Marguerite," continued the captain, his voice unsteady as he put the question, "are you sure—sure beyond all doubt—that you have no liking for this man, for the baronet?"

"O, Captain Forsythe, yes," she replied, covering her face with her hands: "the very sight of him makes me shudder; I cannot even regard him with the ordinary feelings of friendship; and I shall die," she moaned, piteously, "I shall die if they make me marry him!"

The captain's brown eyes shone like stars.

"Lady Marguerite," he went on, dropping the reins upon the ponies' necks, and taking her fair hand in his, "if you were free from this marriage, free to choose whom you might, could you ever—would it be possible for you ever to care for me? It is a bold question, but I love you, little Pearl, as no other man in all the world will ever love you."

Marguerite withdrew her hand.

"I have no right to answer the question, Captain Forsythe," she replied, "nor you to ask it, while I am pledged to marry another."

"I know," he cried, "and I beg your pardon. You are a thousand times too good for me, and yet I dare to love you! I can't help it, Lady Marguerite—I loved you the moment my eyes first rested on your sweet face! My darling! my darling! it will be like death to see you another's!"

Poor little Pearl struggled hard to keep up her maidenly dignity, but with all her proud blood, like the most of her sex, her heart was stronger than her will. She covered her face with her hands, and burst into passionate sobbing. The captain bent down till his black locks swept her bowed head.

"My peerless darling! my beautiful Pearl!" he murmured, "you do care for me."

"Oh, if I could die," moaned the poor girl. "Surely the wide earth does not hold another being so miserable as I am!"

Captain Forsythe caressed the bowed head with tender reverence.

"Little Pearl," he entreated, "answer me! It will do no harm, and my soul hungers to know. Do you love me?"

"I love you!"

The words were just above her breath, but his quick ear caught them.

"My darling!" he cried, exultingly, "look up, and let me see your sweet face! Look up, little Pearl!"

She obeyed, her blue eyes overflowing, her cheeks burning with blushes. He drew her close to his heart.

"I have won!" he exclaimed; "the prize is mine! You love me, Lady Marguerite, and no living man shall take you from me! You shall never marry the baronet!"

Pearl looked at him in consternation.

"But papa—the countess—" she began.

"Never mind," he interrupted; "I can manage it and make it all right—only love me and be true to me, and you shall never marry the baronet, my darling."

His thrilling voice, the steady light of his brown eyes, inspired her with hope and courage. She clung to him in a transport of bliss.

"Oh, if I could believe it," she murmured, "I should be the happiest girl alive."

"You may believe it," he replied, "for as sure as the sun is going down behind the mountains it shall be so."

They drove along for several minutes in blissful silence, the ponies spurning the shaggy heath beneath their feet, and skimming along like birds. About midway through the lonely lane a vehicle passed them, going northward like the wind.

"Who was that?" cried Marguerite, gazing after the flying vehicle; "he looked so much like Angus."

"So he did," replied Captain Forsythe, "but there was a woman lying on the seat—some person taken ill, I daresay."

Lady Marguerite watched the vehicle till it disappeared in the purple gloom, little dreaming whom it contained.

Doctor Renfrow drove across from Ravenswold in the summer twilight, passing the captain and Lady Marguerite just beyond the park.

"Tell Maggie I could not call in as I promised," said Marguerite, "it is so late—and be sure and bring her with you in the morning."

The old doctor nodded pleasantly, and urged his pony forward, humming softly to himself as he meditated.

"That fellow's face strikes me every time I see him," he was thinking, "I must have met him before—yet I can't remember when. A fine, whole-hearted fellow, and poor little Pearl loves him. I wonder if they will marry her to Broughton. Shouldn't wonder. And he's changed out of all belief, Broughton has. I liked him that summer he stopped in Northumberland—but now—pah—his face makes me ill! It would be a pity to throw pretty Pearl away on such a cad. But that old ogre of a countess has the whole of 'em under her thumb, Strathspey and all. I think I'll sound him on the subject, for Marguerite's sake. I like the child—she is so like her mother."

The sun was quite down, and the golden gloom of the summer twilight wrapped the old highland home, as he approached. He saw the carriage in the stable-yard, and knew that his sister and her husband had returned from Perth.

"Where's Maggie?" he wondered; "she's always on the watch for me—looking at Janet's purchases, no doubt—woman like."

He smiled grimly in the gloom, and his thoughts went back to the Strathspeys.

"Poor Strathspey, if ever a man was to be pitied, he is—the sooner death comes to him the better. I knew it would be so! I wonder what he'll do with that rascally son of his—or so-called son. What a raffianly brute he is! It will be a difficult matter to disown him now, there's not a bit of proof to begin with—and the other child's gone. Bless me, what a tangle it all is! I wonder who is at the bottom of it, and what it all means?"

He had reached the gate by this time, and the stable-boy came forward to take his horse. As he stepped down from the vehicle he saw his sister running down from the house to meet him. Her face was very white in the semi-darkness.

"Kenneth," she cried, "where's Maggie? isn't she at Ravenswold?"

"No! She hasn't been to Ravenswold to-day."

"Then it's very strange," continued his sister; "she gone, and none of the servants know where the cook says she made the queen-cake about three o'clock, and then went up to her room, and no one's seen her since."

"Oh, she's out in the grounds somewhere," replied the doctor, carelessly, but his face looked pale, and he made mighty strides towards the house.

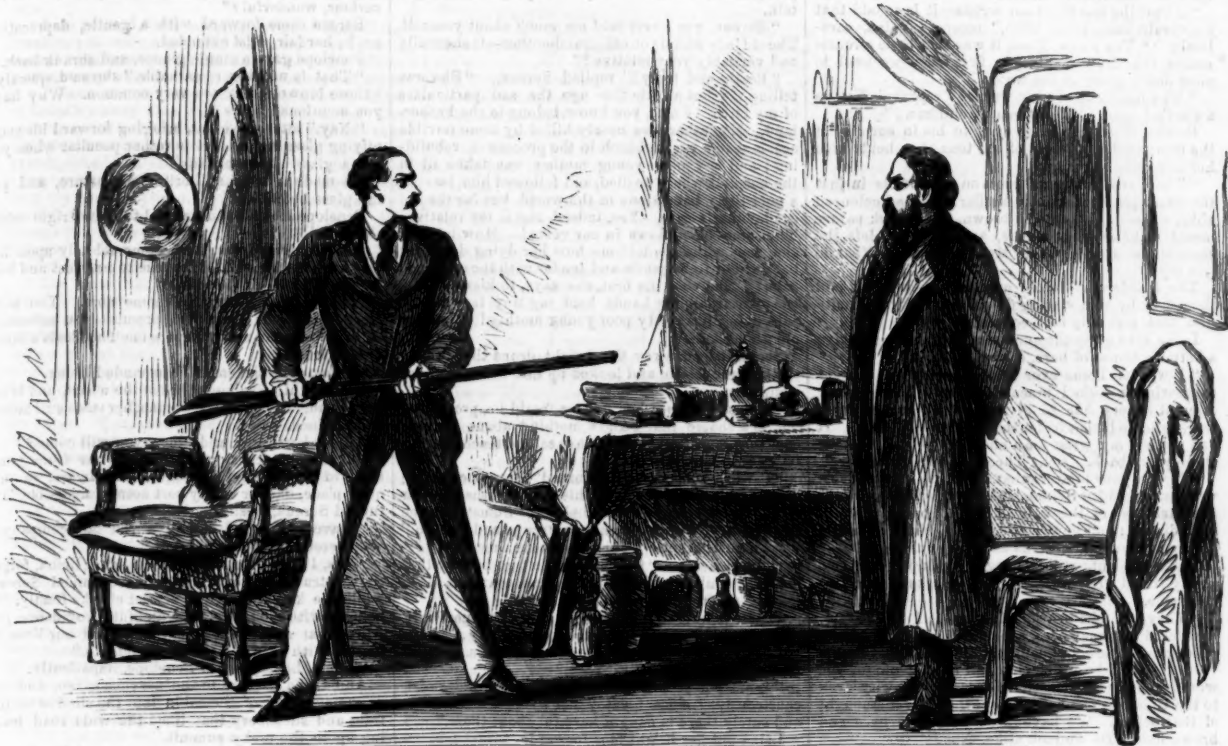
"But her room's all in disorder," continued Mrs. Keith; "and that trunk's open, and some of the things are out—that's strange!"

The old man made no answer, he pushed his sister aside, and made his way to Maggie's apartment.

The window was open, and the suit of infant's clothing still hung on the sill where Maggie had hung the articles in the sunshine. The flannel cloak, with its satin lining ripped loose, had fallen to the floor; and the trunk was open, and the jewel-casket in full view.

(To be continued.)

ALEXANDRA PARK.—Lord Mayor Gibbons some days ago decided to call a public meeting for the purpose of considering how Alexandra Park may be secured as the permanent property of the people of London. Provided that the public be not asked to pay an exorbitant price for the 500 acres up at Muswell Hill, there can be no doubt whatever as to the wisdom of purchasing that large space.



[STEPHANO'S VISIT.]

THE SECRET OF SCHWARZENBURG.

CHAPTER VIII.

Thy love is better than high birth to me.
Richer than wealth. *Shakespeare.*

Two days after Penelope's visit to Nat's cabin, as the taxidermist sat by his pleasant window, not as usual busy over his work, but with folded arms and a grave, care-marked face, buried in reverie, there came a light rush of eager feet outside, very much indeed like the airy dart of the humming-bird, and the door being unlatched Leina bounded in, but stopped short, looking around in disappointment.

She came slowly to Nat's side.
"You expected to find some one else here, my child," spoke Nat, quietly. "Why did you hurry so, little one? Your heart beats violently, I can see, and your cheek is hot and flushed. Do you think a humming-bird allows itself to be so fevered and fluttered? If I am to call you that you mustn't belie your name."

"But a humming-bird never moves lazily; he comes with a dart and a whirl," she returned, playfully. "Never mind the panting, it will stop presently; if I were seen there's no knowing how little time I might have. I ran away, Nat. I got out of a window upon the porch roof, and then I slid down a trellis, and I may well be warm, for I ran hither as fast as my feet would carry me. I thought I saw Rena's boat, I am sure I saw it, and Rena rowing. Oh, how sorry I shall be if she has not come, for who knows where they will put me next, and I wouldn't miss seeing her to-day for anything."

"If she has come to the island she will be here presently. Sit down, fold your wings a moment, restless little humming-bird. Do you mean to tell me that your only method of egress was through the window?"

She laughed merrily, with a ring of defiance in her musical tones.

"Yes. If they lock the doors upon me what else can they expect? A humming-bird must have the free air and sunshine, or—"

She took off her hat and looked down wistfully at its valuable little ornament—and her voice deepened—"or else it will pine and die."

"They will be angry with you. I am sorry," said Nat.

"I can't help it. If it were not for Auntie Pen, I don't think I should care in the least. I begin to find out that it adds a new zest to steal such enjoyment. Am I growing wicked very fast?"

And she tossed her head and looked into his face saucily with those brilliant, dancing eyes.

He smiled upon her fondly, but yet with ill-concealed sadness as he replied:

"Be a prudent humming-bird. It is true, many perils lurk in ambush for such wild and lovely creatures."

"I would rather get back safely without their discovering it," she murmured, "because it is pleasant to think such an escape may be always open to me if they proceed to harsher measures." Oh, Nat, who was your visitor the other day? I have thought so much about him. Was he a brother, or a cousin, or what? It seems, and yet—

"Well, and yet—"

"I don't know exactly. You are just as grand and noble-looking as he, only he seemed another sort."

"I think so—quite of another sort. Don't waste any of a humming-bird's fairy thought upon him. He said he came for a collection of birds. I was sorry he saw the queen of the humming-birds, for fear he might take to lingering in these parts for another look. Don't ever give him one, my child."

There was a dry chuckle in Nat's voice, and a secret glance towards the door which opened into his tiny bed-room, as he said this, which, while it passed unnoticed by Leina, carried deep significance to a concealed listener there, who shook a threatening hand, and made a comical grimace in response.

"Auntie Pen gave me a lecture about it last night, so there's no necessity for you to repeat anything of the sort," laughed Leina. "Poor Auntie Pen, I wonder what great trouble she has seen!" she added, thoughtfully.

"What makes you fancy such a thing?"

"Oh, because I read it on her face. She was terribly shaken by something last night. She stood by the window looking out fully an hour without stirring a single muscle of her face, but when she drew that long, long breath, and unclasped her hands I saw the purple where the blood had settled under her finger-nails. Then when I went to say good-night I found her on her knees, and her lips and cheeks were fairly gray in their pallor. She is very strange, poor Auntie Pen, but she loves me, and I love her better than I could love a dozen Theodosias. Oh!" and here the dreamy voice broke into a glad cry.

"Here she comes—here is our darling Rena."

And the next instant she had bounded to the threshold and was clasping the hand and eagerly kissing the cheek of a tall and graceful maiden, who returned the caresses with equal fondness, though less vehemence.

"Dear, dear Rena, I am so thankful to see you again,"

"My precious little Leina, it is indeed a long time since we met," she replied, in a clear, high, singularly pure voice. "So at last I came hither to learn what Nat could tell me. How do you do, Mr. Nathaniel? You have made a long absence this time. My telescope showed your blinds were down for many days."

"Sit down, my children. Old Nat's is indeed a proud and honoured roof where two such fair ladies grace it with their presence."

The two girls nestled together with arms interlaced and hands clasped.

Leina's vehement nature could not remain quiet. She burst forth every few moments with little exclamations of pleasure and affection. She stroked the hand of her friend Serena, whom she most frequently called Rena, and played with the silky tress that curled against the white throat.

"I wonder what name Nat can find for you, Rena? I am his Humming-bird. Oh, he must show you the one for your hat. I say, Mr. Nathaniel, what shall Rena be?"

The taxidermist looked at them with a yearning tenderness in his eyes.

"It must be a bird, I suppose. I can't think of just the right name for a Humming-bird. But I believe Serena reminds me of a swan."

"Yes, oh, yes, a snow-white, stately swan, graceful and dazzling and magnificent. That is Serena," approved Leina.

"Calm and serene and snow-white," murmured Nat, dreamily.

Serena just bent her stately head and smiled at them out of her cool, pure eyes.

"A truce to nonsense. I wonder what my pupils would say to the comparison? When I seize upon an offending hand or reprove an idle eye there is little that is swan-like in my looks or tone. Moreover, I don't intend to die singing."

She gave a playful flip to Leina's fingers, drawing the latter's eyes to her movements.

"Why, where is your bracelet, Rena?" she asked. "I lost it in the water. The velvet was worn and frayed, I suppose. How plain the mark shows."

They both examined the slender wrist, whose fairness was marred by a single spot of purple-brown tint. Leina pushed away her loose sleeve, and looked down at the broad band of woven strands of gold which spanned her own wrist.

"Mine can't fray and break. It has loosened a little lately though. I told Aunt Penelope of it and she got the key and unlocked it and took off the bracelet, and Urbanus did something to tighten it. But it is still loose."

"What are you talking about?" exclaimed Nat,

coming hastily and looking down with keen interest upon the interlacing fingers.

"About the marks on our wrists—it is so odd that we should have them alike," returned Leina, carelessly. "You know, Rena, it was that little circumstance that drew me to you first when we used to meet down there by the water."

"The marks upon your wrists?" repeated Nat, in a startled tone. "What marks, children?"

Serena lifted her clear eyes to his in surprise at the unwonted sharpness of the tone, but held forth her arm quietly.

"There are two round spots on our wrists in just the same place, of exactly similar size, and coloured alike, of this ugly purplish brown. We think nature meant us to be close friends, and that she left the same signet upon us both, Mr. Nathaniel. What do you say?"

The taxidermist seized upon either hand and laid them side by side, staring down with a fierce intentness that was only half concealed.

Leina held away the cumbersome golden band to give a better glimpse of hers, saying, pettishly:

"I wonder I was ever foolish enough to consent to wearing a locked bracelet. But I remember I thought it very fine to give up the velvet bows I wore when a little girl for this shining gold band. It has not left my wrist for a single day or night these three years back. Aunt Theodosia keeps the key."

"It was your bracelet that made me think of velvet bands," added Serena. "Although I have always been ashamed of the ugly blemish, I never thought of hiding it; and now, since you also share it, Leina, darling, it no longer seems anything unlovely."

Nat was silent, still staring down upon the two pearly-tinted wrists, with their odd marks so precisely the same.

"They are birthmarks of course. I have often wondered if, somewhere, at some time, somebody or other would know and claim me by mine," said Leina.

"But it would be no claim at all now, Rena, for you would answer to the same description—why even to the colour of the hair and eyes. I never thought of that before. We have both dark blue eyes and brown hair. Do we look alike, Nat?"

Nat's eye wandered over the two faces slowly and carefully.

"I never thought of it. No, I do not think you are any more alike than the humming-bird and the swan. It is, indeed, an odd coincidence that you are marked alike."

He proceeded towards his table, searched there a moment, and returned with a small but evidently powerful magnifying glass, with whose assistance he carefully examined Serena's wrist.

If the girls had been less absorbed with each other they would have noticed the profound astonishment, and, it would almost seem, the deep dismay which his observation seemed to bring with it.

"You are right. It was given to seal us true friends always, Rena," murmured Leina, kissing her companion. "You remember that you have promised to follow and find me if ever I should be spirited away. We are alike also in our destitution of home friends—two lonely girls, who must be father and mother, brother and sister each for the other."

"Heaven help me to keep my part, my darling!" said Serena, bending her stately head to kiss the rosy, tremulous lips.

"Let me take the glass, Nat. What do they look like by its help?"

"No improvement, certainly. I wouldn't try it," answered Nat, hastily dropping the glass into his pocket, and, as if to divert their thoughts, he brought out Serena's humming-bird and set Leina to fastening it upon the hat.

She laughed merrily as she tried the effect.

"Another item of resemblance, Rena. If indeed, as Aunt Theodosia seems to think, some great ogre is waiting in ambush to gobble me up he is quite likely to make a mistake and seize you. Dark eyes and brown hair, a mark on the right wrist, and a humming-bird in the hat! If the ogre has only that description to go by you'll understand what it means if you are surreptitiously seized upon. Tell them you're the wrong humming-bird, and send them back for me."

Nat did not join the chorus of their silvery laughter; he strode to the window and stood looking forth, his brow knit, his eye troubled and perplexed.

"What mystery is this?" demanded his inward thought. "What strange, incomprehensible fate has stamped that minute mark, line for line, dot for dot, upon another's wrist? The magnifying glass shows me the same sort of arms as Leina's. One is as surely the stamp of that silver brand as the other. Great Heavens! What am I to think? Have I been mistaken? Are they all mistaken? What a momentous issue hangs upon the rightful solution of the question? I dare not move another step until it is answered."

He went back and stood by them while the two girls prattled on, and broke in presently upon their light talk.

"Serena, you never told me much about yourself. The old lady whom you call grandmother—is she really and veritably your mother?"

"Really and truly!" replied Serena. "She was telling me, but a little time ago, the sad particulars of my birth. I also, you know, belong to the Fatherland. My father was nearly killed by some terrible accident to a great church in the process of rebuilding; and my poor young mother was taken ill in the hospital where he died, and followed him, leaving a poor little babe alone in the world, but for the old grandmother's care. Yes, indeed, she is my relative! The same blood flows in our veins! How bitterly she wept while she told me how her dying daughter begged her to be gentle and tender with the orphaned babe! She was the first, she says, to kiss me, and her own trembling hands held my tiny face to the pale, dying lips! My poor young mother! My dear old grandmother!"

Serena wiped away the bright drops that beaded the silken eyelash, and looked up into Nat's face for sympathy.

"I must go to see her, Serena," said he, promptly; "it is a shame that I know nothing about her except that your faithful service at school teaching contributed to her support."

"I wish you would," returned Serena, eagerly; "she has so few friends in this country that I fear it will never seem like home to her. Sometimes she says even my ways strike her as strange and foreign."

"There is Auntie Pen, do you see her hurry?" exclaimed Leina. "Oh dear! I can't go back to that dismal chamber. Old Nat, help me coax her into leaving me in peace while Rena stays."

Penelope knocked at the door, and Nat opened it. "I want my niece, sir," she said, coldly; "it is very annoying to us that she has taken such fondness for this place."

"I am sorry, madam," returned the taxidermist, courteously, "since I enjoy her visits exceedingly, and surely there is naught harmful about them."

Leina put her bright face forward.

"You needn't be unkind to Nat, Auntie Pen. If there's any fault in the matter it is mine, or somebody's who looked my door. I saw Serena's boat land, and I wanted to see her."

"Serena!" repeated Penelope; "I have heard you speak of her before; it is the girl friend you met down at the beach."

"Yes, my darling friend and comforter. Let me take her with me, and I will go back contentedly," pleaded Leina.

Penelope took a step inward, and her eyes fell upon the figure within, without taking in the face, but as Serena turned towards her with one of her sweet, calm smiles the woman gave a sudden start. It was over in an instant, and she looked away hastily.

"I am afraid I cannot ask her to-day, Leina. I am anxious for you to return with me at once. You know they have reason to be angry with you at the house if they discover your absence. Come back before Theodosia is aware of it."

"I am not afraid of Aunt Theodosia," said Leina, haughtily, her eye flashing. "I deny her right, or the right of any one else, to imprison me against my will. I want to be with Serena."

"Enter a moment, madam, I pray you," entreated Nat. "Perhaps a little frank consultation may brighten the matter."

Half mechanically, Penelope obeyed, and she dropped heavily into the chair he set for her.

Leina went back to Serena and clasped her arms around her, looking beautiful in her rebellion, with her hot cheeks and flashing eyes.

"It is so cruel to deny me the friendship of the only girl I know," she repeated, indignantly. "It is a very little thing I ask, the privilege of coming here to meet her; if you will not invite her there, I cannot be happy without Rena. She is the best solace and comfort of my dreary life."

Penelope put one hand to her side as if some sharp pang assailed her there, and her voice was hollow as she spoke.

"You have grown very suddenly into this friendship, Leina. It is something I have scarcely dreamed about. I do not think you understand how cruel your words appear. Do you mean that it is more and dearer than poor Auntie Pen's long-tried affection? That you demand her before all other ties that have bound you for so many years?"

Leina's quick, impulsive heart was touched by the anguish so feebly hidden by that forced calm voice. She sprang forward to catch Penelope's hand, and showered it with mingling tears and kisses.

"No, no, Auntie Pen, I don't mean that my love for you has lessened a single atom. Only that I love Rena too. She is young like me, and we are very fond of each other. Nature itself meant us for dear friends."

See, she has the same birthmark as mine upon her wrist. Only see, Auntie Pen, the very same—is it not curious, wonderful?"

Serena came forward with a gentle, deprecating smile, her fair wrist extended.

Penelope gave a single glance, and shrank back.

"That is nothing remarkable," she said, quickly; "those brown moles are very common. Why have you mentioned yours?"

"Nay," interposed Nat, bringing forward his magnifying glass again, "it is rather peculiar when you see a glass. See, madam."

He made a little authoritative gesture, and put the glass before her.

Penelope looked, and seemed to grow rigid while she gazed.

Nat's eagle eye was fixed remorselessly upon her face, and she knew it. She rose to her feet and held out her hand.

"Come, Leina, let us go home now. You shall meet this friend again. I promise you solemnly. Only come home now, to spare me Theodosia's bitter accusations."

"When may she come?" demanded Leina.

"To-night, I will meet her at the wharf, and bring her to you," answered the woman, her voice still hoarse and strained.

"Then I will go; and Rena, you will come?"

"I am not accustomed to be so far from home alone in the evening, although I am aware, in this quiet place, danger of any sort seems impossible," returned Serena, hesitatingly.

"Have no fear; I will give you safe company," whispered Nat behind her.

"Yes, I will come, and for your sake, Leina, forget the distrust of your friends," continued Serena, while she kissed the girl's scarlet cheeks fondly. "I believe with you that a watchful Providence has willed that our paths should meet, and our lives be blessed with true and tender friendship."

"Come, Leina!" cried Penelope, impatiently.

And Leina yielded to the nervous grasp, and was drawn away out of the cabin into the shadow of the trees and shrubbery that lined the wide road leading up to the rocky summit.

"Aunt Penelope, I wonder very much at you," cried Leina, angrily. "You were rude and unkind to two friends, who have been very good and generous to me."

"Don't talk to me now, Leina, only hurry to get into the house before Theodosia discovers that you are gone. I cannot bear her keen retorts to-day. My brain is in a whirl. I am frightened!"

"Frightened!" repeated Leina, in astonishment.

Penelope's face shuddered as she answered, tremulously:

"Yes, frightened, Leina, at your danger and mine. What shall I do? Oh, what is the wisest for me to do? If I could only see!"

"You do not think Serena or Nat can do any harm?" exclaimed Leina, indignantly.

She gave a stifled mean.

"Everything, everybody!" she cried out, looking around her wildly. "Oh, girl, girl, if I might clasp you in my arms and fly to some far-off isle or some desert shore, and then the outstretched hands fell limp and nerveless. 'Even there, even there,' she murmured, despairingly, 'the All-Seeing eye would see and know.'"

It was Leina's turn to be frightened. Such deep anguish and distress might well startle and appal her inexperienced mind.

"Auntie Pen, you must go to bed, you are ill, I am sure!" she stammered. "I do not believe you know what you are saying."

"No, I do not know what I am saying; you are right, Leina. Forget whatever it was that I talked about and hurry into the house. I'll make Paul believe I let you out myself. Don't you know they would bar the windows, too, if they guessed how you escaped? I hope Theodosia has not found it out or I should hear another tirade upon my weakness."

Theodosia was not in the vicinity when they glided noiselessly in by the side door, and Leina hurried upstairs to her room, casting an anxious glance behind as she saw Penelope, looking fearfully pale and hollow eyed, motioning for her brother Paul to follow her to the private room.

"Another consultation," murmured Leina, impatiently. "Will the time ever come when I shall have a clue to all this mystery?"

CHAPTER IX.

And is it true? Repay me my deep service
With such contempt? Shakespeare.

Nat turned away with a grave and troubled face from the window whence he had watched Penelope hurrying down the road with her refractory charge. He sat down, passing his hand every now and then across his forehead, without attempting any explanation to his other visitor.

Serena had risen to take her own departure, and her clear, calm eyes followed every expression of his face.

"I am grieved," she said, presently. "Something troubles you very much, Mr. Nathaniel. It is connected with our dear little Leina—and the odious marks on my wrists. I wish you would not fret about it. I have always suspected that you knew more of Leina's history than you allowed us to see. But pray do not attempt to burden yourself with any conjectures concerning mine. You must come to see my grandmother, and she will convince you that there is no uncertainty at all. She has taken care of me from my very babyhood. The mark was there, even when I was in the hospital where I was born. So, though it is quite remarkable, you see it is pure coincidence. I don't know why, but I feel sure it will be a relief for you to have proof of it."

"Yes," said Nat, looking at her wistfully; "you are right, Serena. You have always shown a quick perception of my thoughts, a ready sympathy, a generous friendship that make you seem so much more a woman than Leina that I do not always remember that your ages are the same. It is true I would rather believe you just what I have known you—Serena. There is a great deal of meaning in the name. You have fitted your character to it. I should be sorry, I think, to have it changed. Yet it may be wrong in me."

"I don't think I understand you now, Mr. Nathaniel," said Serena.

He smiled sorrowfully.

"I don't dare affirm that I understand myself. Leina calls me old Nat, but you, Serena, I never heard you say anything but Mr. Nathaniel. Yet I dare say I am just as much an old man, a rough old fellow to you also."

"No, sir, not that, indeed, not that," answered Serena, quickly, a soft pink colour blushing over her clear cheek. "But my kind friend, my wise teacher, my generous benefactor always. But for your assistance should I be able to hold the school which gives to grandmother and me our humble subsistence? Next to her I call you my benefactor."

"But the time will come speedily—it cannot help coming," he said, abstractedly, "when the nearest and dearest friend will be yours. Then you will laugh at this queer friendship of ours."

"There will be no friend who can be near or dear to me if capable of so base an influence," returned Serena, reproachfully. "Do not think of me so unworthily, Mr. Nathaniel. But, if I am to return this evening, I must make haste home. Did you say I should see you at the wharf?"

"I did not promise that you should see me. But I shall be close at hand to watch over your safety."

"I don't know why, but I seem to feel a thrill of premonition as if to-night will bring a startling and exciting experience," observed Serena, thoughtfully. "Dear little Leina's happiness is as dear to me as my own. I feel almost as sure as she that some brilliant fairy life lies waiting somewhere for her."

"You have been a tender friend—pardon me if I say your influence over her has been almost as benign and elevating as a mother's. There again, you see, I forget that you are really as young as she. But if such prosperity comes to Leina you will not refuse to share it with her, Serena, when she asks it?"

Serena smiled brightly.

"My life is calm and peaceful. I do not dislike or despise it, yet surely there is not so much sunshine in it that I can afford to throw away brighter expectations. But now I must really go. Good-morning, Mr. Nathaniel."

She passed out swiftly, neither turning nor looking back, and the taxidermist followed her to the door, and watched until the drooping bough at the turn of the side road hid from him the slender form. Then he drew a long and heavy sigh, and pressing his hand lightly across his forehead, he muttered:

"Have I cherished wild and extravagant visions? Have I cheated myself with false and flattering hopes? Yet Serena's is such a steady, nobly poised soul that I cannot make her seem like a young and giddy girl. I think she would enjoy and appreciate the great advantages I can offer. I know she would adorn and beautify the highest station of any country. I have, hardly realized till now with what tender thoughts and beautiful hopes I have invested her. It would cost me a sore pang to see them fall away at my tough little Dead Sea fruit."

And he sighed again, and turned back toward his table.

At that moment the youthful stranger had flung open the other door.

He came out with a flushed face and angry eyes. "Look you!" he cried, fiercely, holding up a packet of letters bearing all the same peculiar seal. "See what a fortunate accident has revealed to me."

"You have been forcing open my private drawer," retorted Nat, indignantly. "How dare you so abuse

my hospitality and friendship? Where is your honour?"

The young gentleman's lip curved haughtily.

"You—you—talking of honour! You, traitor, villain—double-dyed traitor! Answer for this to me. I tell you, you shall answer it all to me, now, here, or I will kill you where you stand. How came you in correspondence with Von Schubert, and that royal villain, his master?"

"How came you by my private letters?" returned Nat, as fiercely, but the colour had all faded away from his face, and his lips were cold and white.

"I was listening to the girl's musical voice, and playing idly with the nails that stung your writing-desk. Unconsciously I had pushed it from the table and it tottered and fell. I caught it hastily, being afraid lest the noise should betray my hiding-place, and somehow—I cannot tell how, I could not do it again—but somehow the secret spring was touched and the lid flew open, the papers dropping to the floor. I picked them up, carelessly returning them to their place. I recognized my father's writing, but I was little enough prepared to see these. Traitor, villain! you have been playing with both sides. You have cheated me. You have wormed our plans out of me, and already, I daresay, they are on their way to Von Schubert. But it shall cost you dear. I tell you I will have a plain explanation now. You are at my mercy here, however it may be with my poor father. Speak, confess the full sum of your treacherous villainy."

He caught up Nat's rifle, which stood leaning against its stand in that corner of the room, and pointed it full at its master's forehead.

"Rash boy, put down that dangerous weapon!" cried Nat, authoritatively.

"I am no boy," returned the other, hotly. "I am a man, and I am here to represent a great and important interest. You have cheated and cajoled me. Give me some explanation, or I will fire."

"Stephano, you mean rightly, but you are very foolish and absurd. I shoot if you like, but you thus extinguish the only hope of your father's release and future prosperity."

Nat folded his arms and faced his fiery young foe with a cool, calm smile.

The gun was slowly lowered.

"I don't trust you, but I won't forget you are older than I. I will give you opportunity to attempt an explanation even though it be a false one. And yet from the cowardly part you have played you deserve nothing better than to be shot down like a dog."

"With my own gun, under my own roof, by a self-invited guest," resumed Nat, laconically.

Stephano's white forehead flushed with sullen crimson.

"You need not fling that taunt. Take your gun and I summon you to meet me down upon the beach where you may take your choice of my pistols if you like."

"You have a fiery spirit. The Baers had always that," said Nat, sorrowfully. "I wonder will they never learn that it brings them sore anguish and trouble."

Stephano looked at him incredulously.

"You have an air of innocence. Would to Heaven I could believe in it. But nothing can controvert these deadly proofs. I shall read the letters, every one."

"Very well. I suppose it will matter little now. I told you in the beginning that you would embarrass and perplex me. You have begun finely. I wish you were safely back at Schwarzenburg."

"I have no doubt of it. This discovery interferes with your treacherous plans. You are naturally disturbed that I should at last discover you to be the tool and puppet of Von Schubert and his master."

"I am naturally hurt and indignant that having given your family such proof of my faithful devotion to their interest I should be thus maligned and insulted by a hot-headed youngster," retorted Nat, sternly.

"How can I credit such words in your mouth while I hold these conclusive proofs in my hand?" demanded the young man, angrily, and he ran his eye hastily along the lines and broke out afresh.

"Dated only the day before I left Germany. By Heavens, man, there is nothing you can offer in explanation to refute this. The discovery means death and ruin for one of us."

"It is not for me. I accept no such interpretation," said Nat, coldly, but his face showed his perplexity and annoyance.

"What a dolt I have been," pursued Stephano, fiercely. "I came to you with all my plans, never asking for a proof of your friendship—nay, not even of your identity. How do I know now that you are really the man, really, and truly Naiman Womborg? I don't wonder you call me a boy. I have not acted like a man. But it is not too late yet to remedy all."

"I can answer one of your queries promptly," answered Nat, really feeling for the young man's morti-

fication and distress. "I am certainly the one who first wrote to your father from England under the name of Naiman Womborg, but Naiman Womborg's self I am not—not that one to whom those old letters of Von Schubert are addressed. Can you not see, my lad, that a fortunate chance threw the true Naiman and his plot into my way—that it was the master move on the Schwarzenburg side to pass myself off as Naiman and appear to execute the will of Von Schubert and his master?"

"If I could only believe it," ejaculated Stephano, passionately, "but I will no longer be a credulous idiot."

"Look at it reasonably. Why should I trouble myself to cajole you? There is nothing that you have told me that I did not know before. If I had held any unfriendly intentions toward you I might have murdered you last night or the night before in your sleep and none have been the wiser, for who would be able, if he had the interest, to trace the newly arrived German to my door? On my honour, Stephano, I assure you that you may, and you ought to trust me."

"But why?" persisted Stephano. "I see now the absurdity. What is your interest in us? This Naiman Womborg's friendship my father explained by remembering that he saved his sister, once from drowning. But you—why should you be loyal to me and treacherous to those who are able to pay you handsomely?"

"That is my secret," answered Nat, firmly.

"And I must share it to be able to renew my confidence in you," said the young man, quite as resolutely.

The taxidermist for a moment impatiently bit his lip and then turned suddenly.

"If I give you a hint, a glimpse of my true identity, may I calculate in future upon your implicit obedience to my instructions, your faithful help, even where matters look strange and dubious in your judgment?"

"If you convince me of your good faith to our cause, you certainly may," replied Stephano, but his tone betrayed his incredulity.

Nat still stood debating within himself some important question, but he seemed at last to arrive at a deliberate decision.

"See how much I trust to you, Stephano," he said, in a sad and slightly reproachful voice. "My secret is one of the most vital significance. I have kept it locked securely in my own breast for these many years, and you have given me no such proof of your faithfulness and integrity as your family have received from me. Yet in the face of your angry abuse and lack of faith I put myself in your power. You ask for proof of my devotion to the Schwarzenburg cause, of my deadly enmity to the schemes of that royal traitor and Von Schubert, his minion. Well, Stephano, you shall see."

While he spoke he was unfastening his right sleeve. He pushed the linen fabric away and showed a broad piece of leather securely buckled around the wrist. That in turn was undone, and the white, smooth flesh, its protected fairness showing from the tanned arm like a bracelet, was revealed to the young man's wondering eyes.

There on the wrist was a circular, purplish-brown spot, the very counterpart of that which Leina's gold bracelet and Serena's black velvet concealed.

Nat took out the little magnifying glass and passed it to Stephano's trembling fingers.

The latter had flushed a sudden and violent crimson, his eyes dilated with dismay and amazement.

He seized the glass, and stared through it with wild, fierce eyes.

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated he, at length, dropping the glass, and sinking into the nearest chair, and now his colour had all faded out, and even his lips were white.

Nat looked at him calmly, evidently restraining his own excitement to refrain from adding to the other's agitation.

"You have proof now that I was right in sending the Baron Valentin Baer word that there was a ray of hope for him, a witness whose testimony might make some change in his sentence."

"It seems impossible!" muttered Stephano, running his eyes eagerly and scrutinizingly over the bronzed, weather-beaten face, "and yet I cannot refuse to acknowledge that proof."

"No. I know you would not deny that."

"But it is all a mystery. My poor father! I hardly know whether this news will give him most joy or pain," muttered Stephano, drearily.

"It should be all unmitigated joy, if only the path were clear," said Nat.

"But you have remained here knowing why he was sentenced to that life-long imprisonment!" exclaimed the young man, reproachfully.

"Hush! I did not promise to explain any more than would give you proof of my sincerity in the

Schwarzenburg cause. If I also had not been caught in that wily villain's toils should I be skulking here for a single hour? But what would it avail, though sacred Justice herself should point out the rights of this case, while he held the power and presided as judge? He must be outwitted by his own weapons. And is it not a powerful preparation that I have taken Naiman Womberg's place, and am trusted with his plot and plan? Look not so downcast, Stephano, the fortunes of your house rise with mine. Your father's remedy may prove a successful one."

"And you approve it?" asked Stephano, anxiously. "I do not say it nay. It lies in other hands for settlement, my lad. Win there and I give my benediction."

The young man's face brightened out of its perplexity.

"I thank you, sir. I see now how magnanimous and noble your heart is."

"And you are not sorry for your discovery?"

"No. I was stunned, I think, by the shock of the surprise. But I see now how much joy it may bring. Best of all it is to have this indisputable refutation of the foul calumny that has darkened my father's reputation. How Roderich will rejoice! He would always have it that a heavy nightmare hung about our father's spirits, sadly suggestive of guilt. The dread that something would prove the truth of the black accusation was almost a monomania with him. Thank Heaven that is impossible now!"

Nat smiled sadly.

"Fate is kinder than our own passions, Stephano. Learn to curb the fiery Baer temper while you are young. I do not say but there will be many bitter and troublesome memories to mar our happiness should Valentin and myself ever take each other again by the hand. But time works marvels, and it may be we shall only rejoice in our hard discipline since we thereby have learned to conquer evil passions."

"All this makes wondrous change in my ideas and confuses all my plans," murmured Stephano, meditatively. "I confess I do not see what advantage can come of an inactive residence here."

"Your part, just now, has nothing to do with seeing, only to obey confidently," returned Nat, smiling faintly. "As I said before, you will be likely to trouble and embarrass matters if you interfere. A single false move, even now, may lose all the advantage I have gained. I cannot afford to risk any rashness. And this Foss family are devoted blindly to the enemy. I see plainly that there is no possible chance of winning them over, and cannot help respecting their enthusiasm and self-abnegation, although I know they are given to a wicked cause. I was set to watch them lest they should be open to bribery. But it was a needless task. Their loyalty and devotion to the cause are almost morbid, growing out of some vow which they took beside their father's dying bed. It is very little assistance I can get from them—the only chance being from this Penelope, whose love for Leina seems the strongest passion of her nature. But when my next letters arrive I shall see my way more clearly. There is some signal move coming. I see it by the increased vigilance of the Foss family. I feel it myself intuitively, as we know by the air when the tempest is gathering."

He went out as he spoke the last words, and baring his head allowed the fresh breeze to lift the damp locks from his forehead and cool the fever there.

Slowly thence he strayed down the path until it brought him to the water's edge. There he sat down, playing idly with the pebbles that strewed the sand, his head drooping, his eyes downcast.

Two or three of the fishermen's children seeing him there came laughing and skipping to his side. He had a cheery smile and a bit of candy from the pocket that carried a variety of treasures for them, but soon fell off again into abstraction, and they strolled away and left him to his musing.

But there was one eye never left him, nor lost a single expression of the grave and pensive face.

Crouched among the thistle bushes which hedged about the tall rock at the taxidermist's right hand was a rough, uncouth figure, and its wild, fierce eyes, filled with angry and baleful light, glowered upon him and followed him when at length Nat rose and took his leisurely way homeward, while a gaunt hand was shaken wrathfully after him, and a hoarse voice muttered:

"I know you well enough. I haven't forgot your knocking me down and bawling as pretty a game as ever was started. I should like to know what you're hanging about here for and passing yourself off as Nat Womberg for. There's some meaning to it, and I'll find it out and get my revenge yet."

(To be continued.)

WOMAN'S WORK IN AUSTRIA. — Women in Austria perform the duties of bricklayers' labourers,

and may be seen carrying hods of mortar and baskets of brick up high ladders. More than this, they dig and wheel barrows of "ballast" almost as nimbly as the men. They chop wood, they carry water, they offer to black your boots in the street, and perform many other little offices which, according to our notions, do not, and should not, come under the denomination of "woman's work."

GLIMPSES OF SOCIETY.

CHAPTER XI.

"WHY did you write to me that your husband was ill?" asked Mr. Evarts, entering the sitting-room where Anna Zane was busy over a piece of embroidery.

"He was, dear father, but, feeling that a short walk would do him good, he went out a short time ago."

"Yes—and I saw him entering a house which bears the name of Madame Stella Hayden on the door-plate."

"Stella!" gasped the young wife, turning to a deathly pallor. "Stella! That was the name he muttered last night while stupefied with drink!"

"Child, what did you say? Has Edward Zane dared to come home to you intoxicated? Now I know why you looked so ill this morning, and why he did not dare to come to my counting-house—the villain, the ungrateful villain!"

"Oh, father, father, do not call him that!"

"He is a villain, and an ungrateful one too. Have I not reared him from boyhood, educated and advanced him, and at last given him my dearest treasure in you! And now he wrongs you by drinking, and perhaps doing even worse—I know not what."

"Father, dear father, he will reform. I feel sure he will. This sudden fortune has turned his mind for a moment!"

"It may be for all time," said the merchant, sadly; "I will go this instant to the house, and confront him with his infamy."

"No, father, no. Not for a world. You would drive him to desperation."

"He will drive you to the grave."

"Oh, sir, there's a thief in the house—I saw him but now, a climbing up by the pear tree to the second-storey window."

It was Mary who made this report as she rushed into the room.

Mr. Evarts instantly ran upstairs, followed by Mary with a poker in her hand.

Anna remained where she was, faint with a new horror, for that name—Stella—rang in her ears like the death knell of all her married joys.

A minute passed, then Mr. Evarts came back, dragging a miserable-looking boy with him. It was Ragged Dick. Mary followed, brandishing a poker.

"Run for a policeman, Mary, run, and we'll have the little burglar looked up!" cried Mr. Evarts.

"Oh, please, sir, I didn't come here to steal. Don't send for the police—please don't, for I'll be looked up if you do," cried the boy, in a pitiful tone.

"What did you come here for?"

"If you'll let me go I'll tell you, sir, and tell who sent me, and I'll never, never do so no more. Please, sir—I know you're good."

"Tell me who sent you, and what you came for, then?"

"Will you let me go if I do, sir?"

"If I find you have been the tool of others, yes."

"'Twas he, Bellamy, sir, and he sent me to find little Nellie. He's to give me twenty pounds, sir, if I find her."

"Heavens! Perhaps he wants to murder the child!" cried Mrs. Zane. "It was the dear little one for whom, with her grandparents, you have provided a home."

Mr. Evarts darted a look of caution at his child, but it was too late; the elfin boy now knew surely that Mr. Evarts had placed the child in a home somewhere.

"What does that man want the child for?" he asked, sternly, of the boy.

"There's been two parties arter it, sir—both offering money. One was a man that called himself Barnaby Bulge, or something like that. He offered twenty pounds. Then a woman came in a carriage, and she said two hundred and put ten down. Her name was Stella something or another. I stood in the corner and heard her tell it."

"Oh, father, do not let her get the beautiful, innocent child!" cried Anna Zane.

"She shall not, my daughter—nor any one else. I have taken the old people and their little grandchild under my care, and they shall be well guarded." Then, turning to the boy, Mr. Evarts added: "If I let you go and give you five pounds to buy yourself a decent suit of clothes with, will you be a better boy?"

"You may bet your life I will."

"And will you keep me informed of any new plots that may reach you in regard to this little child?"

"I will."

"Then here are five pounds. When you have got your new clothes wash yourself clean and put them on, then come to me and I'll give you something honest to do."

"That'll be jolly—it'll be now to me," said the boy as he took the money.

"Show him to the door, Mary; and remember, lad, when you visit here or anywhere else, come in at the door, and not through the window."

"I will."

"Stop a moment, though. Tell me how you knew this place, or expected to find the little girl here."

"Bellamy had a dummy, sir, with your name and number in it."

"A dummy! What is that?"

"A pocket-book I believe you call it."

"Why, it must have been the pocket-book I let Mr. Talmage have to use for those people. It has my name and address on it. I bought it years ago when I lived in this house—long before you were married."

"I reckoned it was one of them parsons as dropped it," said the boy. "They'll have hard work to find it now, for Bellamy plants all he finds."

"We will see about that," said Mr. Evarts.

"Don't let on to him I told you, or he'll kill me," said the boy, whispering.

"Your name shall not be mentioned," said Mr. Evarts. "Go now, and try to be a good boy."

"I will," he promised as he followed Mary to the door.

"What will you do, father, to save this poor child? I am sure some terrible fate is intended for her."

"I will move her and her grandparents down to one of my cottages," said the old gentleman. "You know I never do anything by halves. I have taken them under my protection, and they shall be guarded and cared for safely and tenderly."

CHAPTER XII.

"LOVELIEST of your sex, it almost maddens me to look upon your splendid form, to gaze into your glorious eyes, to hear the music of your voice, and then to feel that, bound to another by the icy chains of matrimony, I cannot take you to myself as my own!"

Edward Zane held the hand of Stella Hayden in his when he spoke these impassioned words.

"Talk not of matrimony and love in the same breath," she murmured, in a low, musical voice. "The one is cold and worldly, the other is part of that sweet, mysterious nature which we feel but cannot understand. I love you, Edward Zane—I love you as madly, wildly as woman can, yet would I scorn the words which man might breathe to unite us according to the world's shallow forms. Am I not now and for ever thine?"

"Dear, dear Stella, so it seems, and yet I tremble."

"Tremble for what?—you, a brave, proud, noble man, while I, weak, frail woman, dare and defy all for your sake! Are you not a millionaire, able to defy the world—its hates and its scorn? Oh, if I were but you."

"What would you do, dear Stella—what would you do?"

"Just what my imperious will dictated. And if that baby-faced wife made a fuss I'd tell her to help herself if she could."

"By Jupiter! I will if she murmurs. I married her in a hurry because—well, I thought I loved her, but I knew she'd have her dad's money, and I was poor then. But since I have met you, Stella, I have not had a thought for her. How gloriously beautiful you are, Stella."

"I am so happy to hear you say so. Other men might flatter me, but I know you speak with lips of truth."

"Lips of truth and love," he replied.

"Truth to me at least," she said.

"Yes, and to no one else on earth would I be true. What can I do to please you?"

"Purchase a yacht—a fairy vessel, in which, apart from the censorious world, we can sail over the bright and beautiful waters."

"I will do it—I will do it. I know of a vessel just built and magnificently fitted up, which the owner cannot possibly afford to keep. I will take her off his hands."

"Do—and we will be so happy."

"But I forgot—I dare not stay too long. My father-in-law sent for me to go to his counting-house. My wife wrote to him that I was too ill to go. The old man may take it into his head to visit me, so that I must make this stay short. I told her I was only going out for a short walk."

"Well, darling, if you must go I suppose you must. But come soon again, for when you are not

here I am more than lonely. But you must take a glass of wine before you go; you will not refuse that I know!"

"I can refuse nothing you ask, dear Stella. One glass of wine with you, then I will go."

From the sideboard near at hand, on a silver salver, Stella Hayden brought two glasses of amber-coloured sherry. Then the two parted—he to return and play the hypocrite to his loving wife—she to glory in her success at dupe-making.

It is a game played not by tens or hundreds, but by thousands in the great city—a game in which at the great final end the winners here will find themselves losers at last.

It is painful to draw such pictures, but this story is from life and for the living, and it is earnestly hoped that it will work a great and a lasting good where good is indeed needed.

Edward Zane had not been gone ten minutes when the Count Volchini was announced.

He did not waste a moment in his usual routine of compliment, but said:

"Madame Stella, you voluntarily offered to do me a favour in connection with that little love of a music-teacher. I believe that I have an opportunity, which has come to me accidentally, to return the favour by doing one for you. You have some interest, I know not what, in a little girl named Nellie, who, with her grandparents, is living in an obscure place in London."

"Oh, Heaven, yes! That child—I would give all I am worth to have possession of her."

"Then go as quickly as you can to this address, where you will find one Peter Bellamy, a publican. She and her grandparents are tenants of his. Go quickly, for Bludge thinks to get possession of her and thus hold some power over you. I would volunteer to go with you, but just now I need Bludge and do not wish him to know of my betrayal of his plans."

"There is no need, count—there is no need. I would rather go with my servants only. I will hereafter try to reward this kindness."

The reader already knows the result of this adventure.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Edward Zane left the house of Stella Hayden he thought of returning at once to his own home, for he had said he would take a short walk and come back, and he knew Anna would look for him.

But the wine which he had tasted was old and powerful, and it stimulated his brain somewhat, and a desire entered his mind to go down to the counting-house of his father-in-law, and, as he mentally expressed it, "to beard the old lion in his den," and at once and for ever to announce his independence of him.

"What good will my riches do me if I am to be mastered by him now as I was when a clerk under him?" he muttered. "I'll teach him that gold is power, and, as I have plenty of one, I'll use the other."

When he reached the counting-house he learned that Mr. Evarts, on receiving a note from Mrs. Zane, announcing his illness, had hurried on to see him.

"You can tell the old gentleman when he comes back that I am of age, and morally and financially able to take care of myself. I came here to tell him so myself, but you can do it for me. I am now going to my club, and after that I shall return home."

This message he gave with an air of great importance to the head clerk, to whom, hitherto, he had always been very obsequious—often, indeed, depending on him for favours.

This gentleman did not like either his pompous air or his language, and said, promptly:

"It is not my duty to bear impertinent messages to Mr. Evarts, sir. If you have dirty work to do do it yourself."

"Puppy! I've a great mind to pull your nose!" cried Zane, in a rage.

"Try the experiment if you wish to be kicked out of this counting-house!" said the excited clerk.

"Kicked! Me, a millionaire, kicked!" shouted Zane, still feeling his wine. "If old Evarts don't discharge you for this I'll know the reason why!"

And the "millionaire" walked out, not liking to measure even nature's weapons with the clerk, though he was twice his age—had grown gray, indeed, in the merchant's employ.

He did not go to his club. That, too, was an idle boast.

An inward presentiment told him it was better he should go home at once.

On the steps of his house he met Mr. Evarts just coming away.

"I have been down to your counting-house, sir, but you were absent," he said, not liking the severity of the look he met.

"I thought you were visiting elsewhere—for instance, at the house of one Stella Hayden," said the merchant, in a strange tone.

The colour mounted in an instant to the very temples in the face of Edward Zane, then it receded, and he was white with fear or anger—Mr. Evarts neither knew nor cared which.

But the foul fiend's readiest weapon came to the mind of the young man—a falsehood.

"Before I went for a walk I did stop at the residence of Madame Stella Hayden, to order, under her own supervision, some choice articles of millinery for my wife, sir; for I knew she would be more particular than the forewoman at her business establishment," said he.

"I suppose you went there last night for the same purpose, but she made you so intoxicated that you forgot your errand."

"Mr. Evarts, this to me?"

"Mr. Zane, that to you, and more if you do not have a care! You shall not break my daughter's heart, sir. You have my warning. See to your conduct hereafter!"

The old merchant passed on, and Edward Zane entered the house, so nerveless that he fairly staggered.

He was met by his wife, who tried to smile a welcome, but, seeing his agitation, felt alarmed.

"Dear Edward, you are worse!" she cried.

"Don't dear me—it is all nonsense!" he cried, bitterly, as he threw his hat on the floor, crushed and shapeless.

"Edward, Edward, what does this mean?"

"That I and your old father have just had a row. It appears that he keeps spies at my heels, and I can't even go into a milliner's to order a new bonnet for you without being taken to task for it."

"A milliner's?"

"Yes; I stopped at the private residence of Madame Stella Hayden, the milliner, to get her to make you the nicest bonnet that could be made, and just now when I met him on the steps he threw it in my face as if I had been doing wrong."

"Oh, Edward, dear Edward, there has been a cruel mistake somewhere. He would not willingly wrong you, and Heaven knows I would not."

"No, I suppose not when you both turn a good motive into a bad one. I suppose you thought I went to that lady's house with bad intentions."

"Oh, Edward, when father came here and told me that he came because I had written that you were ill, and that he had seen you entering a house on the door of which was the name of Madame Stella Hayden, I nearly fainted, I believe."

"Of course. Your idol had fallen from off the pedestal of love, purity and fidelity on which you had placed him," sneered the pitiless husband.

"No, Edward, no! but I remembered that last night, when you lay on the door-step so helpless that you knew not who was near you, you muttered her name again and again."

"Yes; I suppose I had a bonnet on my mind and was trying to keep the name there too. I had just heard of her last night as the most fashionable milliner in town."

"Well, dear love, we will never speak of her again. Are you ready for dinner? I told Mary to have it early, thinking you would be home all day."

"Yes, I'm ready, and as hungry as a hunter. Have it in quickly, for I am going to see a yacht that has just been built and launched. I think of buying it."

"A yacht, Edward?"

"Yes, a yacht 'Edward.' I'd as quickly call her that as anything else."

"Why, what will you do with a yacht?"

"Sail in her. Go to sea."

"Go to sea? You know I cannot go to sea. Even a trip to Sheerness on the steamboat made me very ill."

"Oh, you needn't go. You'll have your carriage on shore, your nice house in town and country, not an old shell like this."

"Oh, Edward, a year ago you said it was a palace and I was its queen."

"Did I? Well, I was young and foolish. Money brings age and wisdom with it, I reckon, for now I hate the old crib. It wasn't good enough for your cross old dad, but good enough for us after he had got tired of it."

"Why, Edward, he had it rebuilt for us and all newly furnished from top to bottom, at a cost of over five hundred pounds."

"I'll sell it for fifty to the first bidder."

"Edward, Edward, do you mean to break my heart?"

The tears of his wife touched the hard heart of the young man once more, and with a little tenderness in his tone he said:

"There, my pet, don't cry. I was only joking."

And he put his arms about her and kissed her with his false lips.

Woman-like she dried her eyes, returned his caresses, and then went to see if dinner was ready.

"It's capital—her getting sea-sick," he said, with a chuckle, the moment she left the room. "She'll never want to go in the yacht, and I can have the

glorious Stella there without any trouble! Capital! How easy it is to cajole her. Rather hard to deceive the old man though, but he can go hang! I'm independent of him now. I can buy and sell him."

"Dinner is ready, dear Edward."

It was his wife who spoke, and he went at once to the dining-room.

(To be continued.)

FEAST DAYS IN PERU.—Not less than 500,000 people in Peru, it is estimated, observe as many as fifty feast days annually. Fifty times 500,000 are 25,000,000. This, then, is the number of days actually subtracted from the labour value of the country in one year in this way. If each one of these days represents but the value of a single real in labour, the loss in the aggregate for one year alone to the material wealth of the country amounts to an enormous sum. But when we consider that the above computation tells but half the story—that probably more than three times that number of days are wasted upon unnecessary and oftentimes unmeaning feast days—the truth becomes imposing. Enough time is yearly expended in feast days in Peru to build a first-class railway every five years.

THE "BULWARK."—The following letter has been received from Mr. Rye, a passenger by the ship "Bulwark." The letter was written while that vessel was lying at Mauritius:—"Port Louis, Mauritius, June 20. After nearly four months at sea we have only got thus far. We left London on the 23rd February, and had little else but a succession of storms until we put into Simon's Town, Cape Colony, on May 12, where we called for water. We left on the 14th of that month, and ten days after, in latitude 41° south, we encountered a fearful gale. On the night of Sunday, the 26th May, we had little hopes of ever reaching land. We were running with a very heavy sea when a big wave came on board right over the poop, sweeping away the wheel with three men who were at it, landing them on the main deck, with broken legs, arms, and ribs; carried away our skylights, half filled the cabin with water, and completely smashing up all our boats. We had about 5ft. of water in our hold. All hands turned to work—ladies and all—and after 18 hours' pumping we at last dared to hope the ship was clear. To make a long story short, we worked hard day and night for 80 or 100 hours, and by Heaven's mercy we are here. We send this by a little barque leaving here for Sydney. Many will be anxious for the safety of our ship. We lost no lives. All well on board."

DR. LIVINGSTONE.—Lord Granville has received a letter from Dr. Livingstone, dated Unyanymbe, July 1, 1872, in which he expresses regret that Dr. Kirk has viewed his formal complaint against the Baniyas as a personal attack. "If I had foreseen this," he adds, "I certainly should have borne all my losses in silence. I never had any difference with him, though we were together for years, and I had no intention to give offence now." Dr. Livingstone says he is profoundly grateful for the efforts made in his behalf in this country, and he had no idea that his request to Mr. Stanley to send back any slaves who might be coming to him would have led to the stoppage of the English expedition sent, "in the utmost kindness," to his aid. Had it been possible for him to know of the expedition he would certainly have made use of it as a branch expedition to explore Lake Victoria. Doctor Livingstone gives a sketch of the route he intends to follow, and hopes to be back at Ujiji in eight months from the date of his letter. In a letter to Sir Bartle Frere of the same date Dr. Livingstone repeats his expression of regret that Dr. Kirk should have taken his complaints about the slaves as a covert attack upon himself. "In fear of a third batch of slaves being imposed on us," Dr. Livingstone says, "I desired Stanley, if he met any such, to turn them back, no matter how much had been expended on them. This led to the resignation of the naval officers in charge. I had not the remotest suspicion that a Search Expedition was coming, and I am very much grieved to think that I may appear ungrateful. On the contrary, I feel extremely thankful, and from the bottom of my heart thank you and all concerned for your very great kindness and generosity. I wish they had thought of Lake Victoria when not needed here." In another letter he says: "I meant to keep most of my matter for publication by myself, but the very great expense Mr. Bennett went to in sending Mr. Stanley led me to give him frankly what may enable him to write a book. It will in his hands do us no harm, for the Americans are good, generous friends."

THE FLAT PEACH OF CHINA.—Peculiar among the fruits of the species is the flat peach of China. It is as if pressed in from the top and the bottom, so that the eye and the stalk come close together, the whole having the appearance of a ring of flesh with a stone in the middle. The colour of the skin is pale yellow, mottled with red on the side next the sun;

the flesh of the same colour, with a beautiful radiating circle of red surrounding the stone, and extending into the fruit.

THE LILY OF CONNAUGHT.

CHAPTER XVI.

The moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

THE exploration of Eva and Theresa did not extend far, for suddenly the eye of the princess caught a glimmer of light in the forward darkness, and on the instant she extinguished their much-wasted taper and they stood in fear and trembling to await what might happen.

All was silent. The light was stationary, and, after a few moments' observation, they distinguished the pale, silvery colour of the rays to be very unlike the light of oil or wax.

"'Tis the moonlight!" whispered Eva, with a wild thrill of hope, and they pressed eagerly yet cautiously on towards it.

At a distance it appeared to proceed from a mere chink, but, on close approach, they saw a ragged aperture in the massive stone wall. It could not properly be called a door, for it had evidently been broken through with great labour by unskilled hands. Through this aperture or breach the light glimmered.

Emboldened by the silence Eva O'Connor stooped and passed through the opening, drawing the frightened Theresa after her.

A few feet distant from the wall was a lofty osken screen, or wainscot, with the upper edge ornamented by carved scroll-work, alternated with spear-points of metal. Over this partition the dim light shone down into the narrow space where the ladies were, but so very narrow was that space that on looking up they could discover nothing but a strip of dimly reflected ceiling, panelled with massive timbers.

"Be of good cheer, Theresa; Heaven has guided us—it is the chapel," whispered Eva to her companion, and, strengthened by the thought, they started to search for some means of egress from their place of confinement.

They soon found that its extent was not great, for the wall around them hindered their progress in any direction. But Eva knew that the aperture in the masonry, which had evidently cost so much labour, had not been made without purpose, and they immediately commenced a careful examination of the wood-work for the means of communication with the body of the chapel, which she was assured must exist.

A joyful whisper from Theresa advised the princess of the discovery, and she hastened to her side.

In feeling down the partition the girl's fingers had come in contact with a small wooden bar or latch, and, raising it, one of the panels swung open and the moonlit interior of the chapel burst upon them in a scene of solemn beauty.

The rays through the side windows fell upon mullion, arch and column in lines of silver light, and made the tablets set in the sombre walls in memory of the sainted dead gleam like blocks of ice.

They did not, however, dwell long upon the beautiful scene, for, as if attracted by the slight sound of their entrance, two men started forth from the darkness and stood in the light of one of the southern windows, silent and rigid as two grim statues.

They were the same forms they had seen from the window of the bed-room, and the princess was starting forward with the name of Moran upon her lips when they vanished as suddenly as they had appeared.

Eva strained her eyes and ears to find a cause for this strange action, and, hearing a sound like the whispering of voices proceeding from another direction, she and Theresa drew back into the deep shadow of a stall near which they had been standing. Neither of the girls had so much fear now, for the thought of friends being within hail gave them courage.

But a few seconds passed when from the gloom beneath the choir emerged a dark figure, and the watchers knew that the whispering sound was caused by the rustle of garments, which now came distinctly to them, though not a footfall could be heard.

The princess and Theresa recognized on the instant the form and carriage of Sister Breda, and drew closer to their concealment, as if they feared the wild being would divine their presence.

The nun swept up the aisle with rapid but stately motion until she was near the chancel rail, when she stopped and turned, facing the part of the church where Eva and her companion were hidden.

There was no more doubt then with either of them as to her identity with the Lady of the Glen. The moonlight showed that the nun's white cap and

tippet had been removed, and now there was nothing to reflect the light save the pale face and hands and the frame of a very diminutive harp she carried. Her face had a ghastly expression, and her eyes glittered with an unnatural brilliancy.

She paused for one moment as if listening intently, her wild eyes all the time ranging around the chapel, endeavouring to pierce the deep gloom where the moonbeams did not fall.

Eva O'Connor trembled lest the concealed persons should be discovered by that piercing gaze, and the lately escaped prisoner be given over once more to the hands of his jailers.

But what was her astonishment to hear the woman speak aloud, in a stern voice, that rolled around the dark walls and ascended to the groined roof in tones of solemn command:

"If I have been too late to stay the course of sacrilege, and the men of blood should already have profaned this holy place by his presence, I warn him of the danger that threatens, and command him to get forth and fly from the vengeance that will pursue him. This is no lovers' bower. 'Tis beyond the power of her he seeks to meet him. The murderer can find no sanctuary. Let him get forth and fly!"

She paused as if awaiting an answer, and the heart of Eva throbbed wildly with the fear that Connacht Moran would obey the injunction, and either step forth and discover himself or, believing her assertion, would quietly retreat and leave her to the will of this frenzied person.

Sister Breda raised her emaciated hand aloft, and exclaimed, in a still louder voice:

"Once more I adjure thee, fly, or blood and vengeance fall upon thee, profane-murderer!"

She had moved a step during these words, and the moonlight, streaming through the stained glass of the eastern window, fell upon her wild face and her upraised white hands, turning them to the colour of blood, and causing her to look like the personification of the vengeance she proclaimed.

The nun held this statue-like attitude but for an instant, for with a quick movement, and one of the maniacal laughs which Eva had before heard her give, she started towards the northern wall.

"Not come! There's yet time to intercept them in the vaults. Ha—ha!"

Her laugh seemed to be echoed from the dark corner where the men were hidden, but it might have been an echo, for she did not heed it but hurried on to a small door in the northern wall.

She touched the stone lintel, and it seemed to the astonished watchers that the point of her finger burst forth into a blue flame, at which she lit a small hand-lamp.

Another cry or whisper of wonder from the whereabouts of the hidden men came to the ears of the princess.

Breda heard it not, but, opening the door, she disappeared.

Scarcely had she done so when the larger of the men, wrapped in a flowing cloak, dashed across the moonlight as noiselessly as a shadow, and followed her.

"It is the forester; he has gone to keep the retreat open. And there is Moran!" whispered Eva, with thrilling heart, as she dimly saw the other form stealthily approaching their hiding-place in the shadow.

"Hist! hist!" they heard, in the slightest whisper.

"My lady, are you there?"

She endeavoured to answer, but her feelings overcame her, and not until the question was repeated could she muster strength to reply, in the same tone:

"Yes, Moran, I am here!"

"Quick, then, my lady; quick!" came the whisper.

"There is not a moment to spare. Perhaps even now we are beset."

"Fly, then, oh, fly, and save thyself," she cried.

"No, let us begone. You know not what danger lies in delay. Be silent and haste."

"Come, then, Theresa. On and Heaven speed us!" exclaimed Eva, returning the pressure of the warm hand, and giving the other one to the girl.

Rapidly the guide led them along the southern wall in the shadows beneath the high window sills. The princess could barely see the outline of his form, she could barely hear the guarded whispers in which he spoke, but she felt the firm, warm grasp of his hand, and fear, all save fear for his safety, fled from her.

But a few moments, she thought, and they should stand once more beneath the free canopy of Heaven, and gaze into the truthful depths of each other's eyes by the pure starlight, as they had gazed many a time in the happy days of yore.

Yet it did certainly seem strange to her, knowing as she did his fervent nature, that he had given expression to no joyful emotion at meeting her once more, had not, as yet, breathed a word, not even a tone of affection.

But the explanation came immediately.

Was it a time for giving way to emotions? Was

not his life in danger and the chance of safety doubtful?

He did not lead them across the chapel to the door through which his companion had followed Sister Breda, but entered one corresponding to it on the side on which they were.

They left the dreamy moonlight and went through into the inky darkness.

"Pause a moment," he whispered. "Beware of the steps."

They heard him shooting rusty bolts behind them, and the screeching of one of them sounded startlingly on the deep silence, but the next instant he again took Eva's hand, and with great carefulness led her and Theresa down a flight of stone steps until they stood upon a level, flagged floor, and they knew by the earthy, fœtid atmosphere that they were in the burial vaults of the chapel.

A chill feeling of fear crept over both at the thought that on every side in the impenetrable gloom reposed the grisly relics of the dead, and remembrance of the skull and bones seen in the rock-chamber made the princess almost expect to see the Sister Breda spring from one of the violated graves in the character of a ghoul.

"Hist!" whispered the guide.

He was answered by a sound of the same kind, and a light sprang up in the gloom, illuminating the arched ceiling and mouldy walls with the low-browed doors of vaults, bearing nearly effaced inscriptions.

Eva and her companion, with a common impulse, looked to see whence the light came.

A tall man, arrayed in a long dark cloak, stood at the door of one of the vaults. In his hand he held a small lantern, which he had produced from beneath the cloak.

It was the same figure that had followed Breda, but the hood of the cloak covered his head closely as if for disguise, and nothing of the face was visible but the sparkle of the eyes between the hood and collar.

"Forester, is it you?" asked the princess.

The man made a sign of silence.

"Moran, what means this?" she said, turning to the other with a look of frightened inquiry, for the surroundings and the mysterious appearance of the man had started strange thoughts.

"Keep heart, my lady, and be silent," was the answer, in the coldest of whispers, and Eva saw that the same frightful cloak and hood hid the form and features of him she loved.

"Away!" she heard, in a whisper, she could not tell from whom, and she turned to see the man with the lantern place his hand on the door of the vault beside which he stood and swing it open.

As he did so the light flashed upon the inscription, and she read in antique characters the words:

DERVOGHAL,

BREFFNY RATH.

OBIT. MCCLXXII.

"Gracious Heavens!" exclaimed the princess, mentally, for her voice failed her. "This is the tomb of the anathematizer of my race. What may this mean? Is it for living burial we are here?"

A sudden clang of doors and a loud trampling were heard in the chapel overhead, and Eva's guide caught her by the arm to urge her entrance into the vault while the other seized Theresa.

Struck by a horrid fear Eva resisted, the guide's disgusting hood was thrown back from his head, and she saw, not the features of Connacht Moran, but the wild, bearded face of a total stranger.

At the instant the man that held the lantern threw it on the floor with an imprecation and crashed it beneath his heel.

The princess gave one wild scream of terror, which was echoed by Theresa as they were lifted bodily by the men and borne into the vault, Eva going first.

The bustle above was becoming louder, and heavy blows were heard as if they were breaking down the doors that led to the vaults, but Eva's terror-stricken ear was attracted by a sort of horrified exclamation proceeding from the man who bore her.

She felt him stagger backward in affright, and her own blood seemed to freeze in her veins as her eyes fell upon a bleached skeleton, standing upright in one corner of the vault, holding a lighted candle in one of his fleshless hands, and pointing with its other to the opposite wall, where, in glaring letters, shone the word:

"Vengeance!"

"Idiot! coward!" she heard, in tones that long rang in her ears. "Will you turn back in affright at the schemes of a mad-woman? Onward!"

With a bound the man passed the object of his terror, and she felt herself borne rapidly along a black passage, the floor of which slanted downward and was so uneven that the man often stumbled, and the walls were so rugged that the girls received many contusions as their abductors ran.

Through sheer exhaustion and affright they were

unable to scream, but their hearing being sharpened for the sounds of pursuit, they could distinguish the drip of water, and soon the air became fresher and cooler and light glimmered a little ahead of them.

In a couple of moments they burst through a clump of trees and stood in the open air on the moonlit slope below the convent on the very spot where Eva had seen the prophesying Lady of the Glen stand on the fatal night so well remembered.

At thoughts of the mysterious being the princess screamed aloud the name of Sister Breda, calling on her from whom she had so lately fled for protection.

Not an instant did their captors pause, for the convent bells began to ring wildly, and like bounding wolves they sprang down the slope to the level glade, dashed past the opening of the Fairy Well, and, crossing the little rivulet at the very spot where the princess and the girl had found the murdered Conrad, they bore their prizes away into the thickest of the wood.

CHAPTER XVII.

The pride, rank pride, and haughtiness of soul; I think the Romans call it stolicism. Addison.

CARLE O'CONNOR lay in a dreamy quietness in the moonlight, save for the muffled tread of the sentinels and the low-humming notes with which one of them strove to lighten the tedium of his watch—thinking, perhaps, the while, of his distant wife or sweetheart.

The camp in the vale had settled into comparative quietude; the licence of revelry allowed in the flush of victorious return had disappeared before the re-enforced discipline.

The white-tented plain was now unusually silent, even for the camp of a rigidly kept army; but this was to be ascribed to the late melancholy events of the burial of the Prince Conrad and the giving out of the insanity of the adored O'Connor's Child; for Eva's quick intuition had truly discovered the working of Sister Breda's malignancy.

The reputation of this strange woman as a physician was so great with the superstition to which she belonged, and through them it had so spread to the outer world, that her slightest representations were received with as little question as the revelations of Scripture.

Her recluse life had a wonderful effect in heightening her reputation, for in those days the voluntary cutting off of one's self from all the amenities of life was accounted the certain seal of sanctity; none ever dreamed that there might be other feelings than repentance and Heavenwardness to cause this desire for isolation—that the most blighting passions of the human heart, awakened by some unrevealed cause, might be matured into terrible power until they crushed out each kind feeling, each fond affection, and left behind but the fierce fires of remorseless hate.

To Eva O'Connor was known the existence of such warped feelings, such reckless impulses beneath Breda's assumed character of austerity and devotion. But the cause of these unholy and unwomanly instincts in one so devoted to the acquirement of knowledge, so desirous of the prestige of good repute, was a mystery to her.

To the outer world, including the royal family, the name of the recluse was a word of sacred significance, and her dictum was respected and held as law.

Therefore, when the king, after the first ebullitions of his fiery nature were over, caused inquiries to be made for Eva, he felt forced to content himself for a time with the representation that his child was in a state of mental excitement in which it would be highly indiscreet for any relative, especially her father, to visit her.

This message, with an assurance of the tenderest care being bestowed on the suffering lady, was repeated by the princess from the words of the Recluse Nun. So that the days and the nights passed by the princess partly in unconsciousness and partly in the tortures of apprehension and doubt were anything but happy ones to the king.

His love for his daughter was too deeply seated to be shaken by the light breath of calumny, too bright to be long obscured by the dark clouds of anger.

Yet his passion at the public revelation of the loves of Moran and Eva had not subsided.

His anger against the unhappy prisoner was greater, much greater, as the stealer of the affections of the princess than as the suspected murderer of the prince.

A curious conflict raged in his breast. On the one side were the powerful pleaders, natural, fervent love for his own child and acquired affection for the young knight, the son of his adoption—and on the other the dark accuser, pride.

Now that the secret of the young people's love had become known to him he could not but acknowledge to his own questioning that he had been culpably blind, that it should have been expected, for if Hea-

ven ever directed earthly matches these two were meant for union.

But pride, unreasoning pride, that would plunge into misery the very being whom it proposes to elevate—hypocritical pride, that bends its brows contemptuously on mankind, yet cringes for the good opinion of the masses it pretends to scorn—interposed between the king and his better nature.

It led his thoughts away back into the dim past to his long line of ancestors, and the grim old ghosts that loomed up before his mental vision seemed to frown at the imagination that natural affection should be allowed to interfere with their dignity or the happiness of a fair descendant be weighed against the desired equality of rank.

Anything but that.

This young love must have been crushed even had not the aspiring lover fallen into the toils of adverse fortune as he did. But now, in the common course of stern justice, he would either be swept away from the face of the earth or by the exercise of royal clemency be banished for ever from the realm whose outraged laws had risen against him.

For neither the king, his sons, nor those of the nobility who had witnessed the astonishing scene at the banquet and the quarrel by the moat had the least doubt that Moran shed the blood of Conrad O'Connor.

All, however, as soon as the first feelings of horror and anger had somewhat subsided, gave him the benefit of the extenuating circumstances of the delirium produced by his wound, and of his having rendered very great provocation before lifting his hand against the life of the prince.

On the whole, the heart of the king leaned with clemency toward the young warrior who had so long been like one of his own sons, and, but for this unfortunate lover, the extent of Moran's punishment, in case of the crime being proved home to him, might, in view of the before-mentioned extenuations, have been limited to an exile or blood fine, and a temporary banishment from the king's dominions.

But the fiery monarch knew the child of his heart too well, and the willful, impulsive nature she inherited from him, to trust to forbidding or separation to cure this hopeless attachment.

He knew that to her imaginative and enthusiastic mind persecution and suffering would only array the young knight in more heroic guise; and that the image of the banished man would be treasured in her heart to the exclusion of all others, even his own, for would he not appear to her as the cruel blighter of all her young hopes?

The pride of the O'Connor had been too deeply wounded for this startling event to be passed lightly over, and if his mind did recoil from the thought of the last bitter extremity awaiting his former favourite, if

Nature, as if she knew him womanish and weak, Tugged at his heart-strings with complaining cries, To talk him from his purpose,

he endeavoured to smother her pleading voice by the thought that he did not step out of his way to avenge the insult of his royalty or the spilling of his son's blood; it was but the course of justice—let it sweep on.

The memory of a malefactor who had actually suffered the ignominious death his crime deserved would vanish sooner from the heart of the young maiden than that of a man still living, and dignified by suffering.

Probably, too, memories of his own youthful loves and vagaries came over King Fedlim, and added to the tumult of thought that rushed through his mind and kept him waking, astonishing the yawning sentinels by the late burning lights in the royal apartments.

The room in which the king kept vigil adjoined the royal bedchamber and the retiring apartments of the valets and gentlemen in waiting.

A couple of pages dozed in the ante-room, and one of the body-guard, with drawn sword, stalked to and fro in the corridor like a gloomy spectre.

The king sat at a table on which two lamps burned. A book lay open before him, but his thoughts were not upon it. His head rested on his hands, and his eyes were vacantly fixed upon the air before him, but in their very vacancy shone the light of unrest, while over his expressive features flitted all the emotions we have endeavoured to describe, and many beyond our powers of description.

The spaciousness of the apartment, to the extremes of which the light of the lamps barely penetrated, with its massive casings and ceiling-beams of time-stained oak, gave the royal watcher in the centre an appearance of sorrowful loneliness, while the monotonous "drip, drip, drip," of the clepsydra, or water-clock, seemed to repeat mournfully:

Men are mortal—kings their kin.

Suddenly the dozing pages in the ante-chamber were startled by a heavy blow and loud cry in the

royal apartment, and they sprang, half awakened, to their feet, and rushed with exclamations of affright through the folding-doors into the king's presence, followed by the alarmed guardsman, sword in hand.

The king stood in the centre of the apartment with angry look and startled attitude. The high-backed chair in which he had been seated had been overturned, and his book lay in the farther corner of the room, its leaves disordered as if it had been thrown there with great force.

The crowd of servitors paused in wonder to see the heaving chest and flaming eyes of their master. None ventured to speak until his wild gaze was turned upon the group with angry inquiry, then his favourite page, a beautiful boy of fifteen summers, stepped forward and bowed before him.

"Sire, did you not call?"

"No," replied the king, angrily, but in a half-absent manner, seeming in doubt as to the meaning of the question or the cause of the boy's presence. "What means this intrusion? How dare you enter thus pell-mell into my presence? Leave instantly, all of you, and henceforth know your duty better."

"Pardon, sire," said the page, with a profound obeisance, and he was imitated by the others as all retired backward toward the door.

"Stay, boy," cried the king, sternly. "Go, all the rest of you."

The guardsman and ushers retired, the great folding-door swinging noiselessly close behind them, and the next moment they were engaged in whispered debate upon the appearance of a banshee to the king.

The boy paused with his hands crossed upon his bosom.

"How long is it since you entered?" asked the king, with severe, penetrating gaze.

"But this instant, sire."

"Did you see anything?"

"Nothing, sire, but your highness where you stand."

"Did any person pass hence through the waiting-chamber?"

"None, sire," said the boy, with wide-open eyes.

The king noticed the look, and knitted his brows, then after a pause he turned to the boy with eyes that seemed to burn him through, and asked, suddenly:

"What brought you here? What heard you?"

"Nothing, sire, but your rapping—and I thought I heard a call."

"My rapping?"

"Yes, sire. I was drowsy and did not hear the first."

"I did not rap for you!" said the king, severely.

"I crave your pardon, sire—I was mistaken. I came abruptly in, lest I should be blamed for carelessness," said the boy, with trepidation. "My waking cry alarmed the rest."

The king looked at him for a moment or two and waved him away, but the boy had hardly reached the door when he recalled him.

"Here, sirrah!" he exclaimed.

The page came back, and bent before him with downcast eyes.

"Look you, boy," said the king, with forced coldness, "you are one of those sons of princely stock whom the home of the O'Connor fosters!"

The boy's large eyes glanced up to his master's, and a bright flash flashed across his young face and was gone—not as soon, however, but that the piercing eye of the king noticed it.

"I know it!" he cried, angrily. "It needs but years to gain our confidence, to steal our heart, but years to strengthen you to wield a weapon, till, like the rest, you raise it 'gainst your king."

"Sire, my kind lord!" said the page, in an appealing, reproachful tone, bending his knee to the king.

But he saw again the impatient wave of dismissal. He arose, bowed, and was retiring through the door with a hurt look, when the fiftful monarch called him back, and there was a tone of kindness in the recall.

"One moment, Ronald," said the king; and then, pausing, he gazed in a wearied manner at the clouded young face before him. "I have wronged you, boy," he continued, "but the hardship rests more heavily on me than you."

"Ah, my liege—"

"Heavens!" said the king, with a sort of passionate self-communing—"Heavens! when will these imaginings leave me? How is it with me when I know not whom to trust, when I have lost all faith in gratitude and doubt my children's hearts? Go, my boy, you are overtaken. Forget what I have said, and never speak of how you have seen the O'Connor moved. I will retire alone. Go also and seek repose."

As the king spoke he held out his hand to the boy, who seized it with glistening eyes, and, pressing his lips to it, was murmuring words of blessing and



[THE WARNING.]

good-night, when the faint tones of a bugle were heard, and immediately afterward the clash of arms in the court-yard, the hollow sound of horses' hoofs upon the drawbridge, and hurrying feet in the lower halls.

"What means such tumult at this hour?" asked the king, hurriedly. "Can it be a courier so late? Haste, Ronald, bring me notice of the cause. If it is a message of import bring the bearer hither straight."

The page hastily left the room, and in a few minutes the tinkling rap of an usher's silver-tipped wand was heard upon the panel.

"What! an audience so late?" cried the king, wrapping his embroidered mantle more closely around him and returning to his seat. "By my word, 'twill be better than sitting sighing or frighting at ghostly visions. Brisk times are welcome! Come!"

The doors were opened by two attendants, and Ronald appeared, accompanied by a rugged-looking horseman.

He was dressed in dark clothes, but they were gray with dust, as were also the ends of his black, bushy hair and the broad-crowned cap or bonnet which he held in his hand.

Large boots of unstained leather reached above his knees, and his enormous spurs jingled as he walked. "A courier from the east, my liege!" announced the page.

"Let him advance and deliver his trust," was the king's answer.

The courier stepped forward and, dropping his broad bonnet upon the carpet, he knelt with one knee upon it and held forth a packet.

The page took it and passed it to the king, who tore it open and ran over its contents with a hasty glance.

As he read a frown gathered on his dark brows, but it melted away in a stern smile.

"Ha! Desmond! Brazil!" he exclaimed as he raised his head and saw the prince hurriedly pass between the bowing servitors. "We were ever quick to scent the conflict, and by my soul we are like to have rich quarry!"

The two young warriors bowed before him but uttered no word of question. 'Twas his to command, theirs to obey.

The king looked at them proudly and continued: "What think ye of the gallant Be-mingham, for, by my faith, he is a gallant soldier, however his suspicions wronged us. He is hot in preparation for the invasion of our realm, to revenge, he says, our recent treachery. This is a well-timed despatch, brought by this trusty messenger. Rise, man, thou art a soldier, not a courtier!" he cried, bluffly, as his eyes fell on

the courier, who was still kneeling. "Thou hast ridden hard and done thy duty well, thy dusty jerkin proves it. Ho! there without! Take this good man where he may be refreshed."

The courier arose but hesitated to join the attendants who had stepped forward at the command.

"What? Is thy message not complete?" said the king, noting his hesitancy. "What hast thou more to state?"

"Nothing of my own, your majesty," said the man; "but as I crossed the outer eastern lines of your encampment trouble was there."

"How?"

"Part of the forces had revolted and the commander who allowed my passage bade me advise you of it when I came. Such I have done, your highness."

"We thank thy care and memory," said the king, with a bow and a gracious smile, at the same time calling the chamberlain to give instructions for the rewarding of the messenger.

But no sooner had the man and the attendants withdrawn than the king turned to his sons with a look of displeasure.

"How's this?" he cried, "that on the heels of foreign threat comes news of home revolt? Have not the camp carousals ceased?"

"'Tis but a trifle, father," answered Desmond—"some foolish bicker of the mountaineers as easily quelled as started. I will myself attend to it."

"Do so, my son. These jealousies and bickerings must be crushed. They'll soon have chance to vent their spleen on foes instead of one another. But be prompt."

"As soon as horse and armour can be got," answered Desmond, retiring.

"I know thy speed. Ha! Stay! What's that? Another messenger arrived? By the holy rood, the times are getting brisk! Away, Desmond, hasten thy equipment. Brazil will stay with me. I will but dress and meet thee in the hall. Come to me ere you go."

Prince Desmond gave orders to his esquire, whom he found awaiting him, for the quick saddling of their horses.

He then hastened to his chamber to array himself for his night ride, and, in a space of time in which none but an alert soldier could have accomplished it, he entered the grand hall and found his father and brothers in council with the chiefs of the septs and captains commanding army divisions.

Another messenger, just arrived, dust-covered and fatigued, stood before them as if awaiting orders or leave of retirement.

"Ha! Desmond!" exclaimed the king, as his son appeared. "Do Burgo, too, assumes the injured innocent, and starts again his forays. His harriers are already out with fire and sword. By my soul, it seemeth time to light the beacon fires for other cause than jubilee!"

"Let them flame!" cried the prince, in a deep voice that sounded like the beat of a war-drum. "Let them flame! We are ready!"

The assembled chieftains caught fire from the stern smile and flashing eyes of the warrior prince, and exclaimed, with one burst of enthusiasm:

"Ay! Let them flame! We are ready!"

"Thanks, noble chieftains, for this generous burst; my heart beats high and springs to meet your impulse," exclaimed the king, his fine face lighting up with the spirit of the moment. "Let them levy war! By the sacred staff, we are but grieved they should anticipate us. But we will follow close upon their kibes. Let no time be lost; we'll even seize advantage of the night. Go, bid the castellan fire the tower beacon. Let the hill-tops burn! Speed forth the henchmen with the martial summons till the land echoes to the bugle's call: O'Connor's sword is drawn!"

As these words rolled through the monarch's lips with the fierce music of a mountain torrent, every heart thrilled, every eye lighted with heroic fire, every hand grasped a sword hilt, and when the royal falchion flashed on high a hundred blades leaped up like tongues of flame, a hundred voices swelled the one wild shout that seemed to shake the walls:

"O'Connor's sword is drawn!"

It was taken up by the ushers and esquires and guardsmen and pages in the hall; it was repeated by equerries in the courtyard, it was hoarsely roared by the bearded soldiers rushing from the guard-rooms, and shouted onward by the grim sentinels upon the battlements until the far-lying startled camp took it up and it spread away, away over the moonlit plain in one wild echo of warlike defiance.

In the midst of the tumult a clatter of hoofs rang through the court, and a small body of horsemen swept around to the front entrance, led by an esquire holding the proud-pawing charger of the prince.

Simultaneously Desmond appeared. With one spring from the steps he alighted in his saddle, and giving rein to the impatient animal dashed towards the drawbridge.

Then arose a great cry not so loud but more thrilling than the other!

"Hurrah! Desmond! Aboo! First in the battle! Heaven keep thee, dark prince!"

(To be continued.)



[THE STUMBLING-BLOCK.]

ELGIVA;

OR,
THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snapt Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c., &c."

CHAPTER XXVII.

The rose is fairest when 'tis budding new,
And hope is brightest when it dawns from fears;
The rose is sweetest washed with morning dew,
And love is loveliest when embalm'd in tears.
Oh, witching rose, whom fancy thus endears,
Emblem of hope and love through future years.

"ELGIVA, at last my own, my very own," murmured the enraptured lover of the whilome heiress of Arnheim, whose sobriquet of Juan De Castro must henceforward be lost in his new style and title of Ludovic, Earl of Chetwode.

The fair girl had been long expecting his advent. Her ears had been strained to catch every sound which could betoken his near approach to the morning-room where she had waited wearily and anxiously for his coming.

She knew full well that he was closeted with her father in his private apartment, and that on the result of that interview would depend her own and her lover's future happiness.

Count Arnheim had preserved a strange, unaccountable silence to his daughter on the subject of the young man's story and pretensions alike to the title and to the heiress who was by him deprived of rank and wealth.

"Elgiva, if I am satisfied I shall know how to relinquish with dignity the honours that have so many years been my own," he said, loftily. "It is not my pleasure to dwell on such painful, degrading subjects, which are not fit for your ears. When my decision is made it will be announced to you in proper course."

The young heiress was forced to be content and to submit. But her eyes were not blinded if her lips were closed, and she could not but perceive the haggard gloom of her father's face, she could not but know that he held interviews with stranger visitants on more than one occasion when she was awaiting his presence, and that after each one of such secret interviews he had appeared more abstracted and reserved than before. But at length the suspense seemed to be at an end. Count Arnheim's manner grew easier and more unfettered, and at length he volunteered the welcome announcement to his daughter that he intended on that morning to grant an audience to the young man who claimed such near kindred to

them, and examine fully and thoroughly the pretensions he set forth.

"Then, Elgiva, there will remain but one more matter for weighty consideration," he said, more gently than he had of late spoken. "My child, you perhaps can hardly realize the full value of all you are anxious to relinquish. Hear me to the end," he said as she was about to speak. "I may not again argue the matter with you, Elgiva. Nay, I will sacrifice more than you can well imagine for your sake, should you decide on pursuing your own wilful way. But it is almost impossible for you to see the difference between assuming a princely rank in another land, where the past will be unheeded, probably unknown, and appearing in a doubtful and far lower station in your own country. Gossip will be busy to retail scandal, to invent degrading revelations on the causes of your change in position and marriage with this new pretender to your former position. They may think the hand was but bought, Elgiva. They may sneer at the convenient arrangement and discredit the facts. You will be looked down on, censured, sneered at by the very world that has hitherto worshipped at your feet. And I—But no matter. The time will not be long that I shall live to endure whatever may be the trials, the bitter mortification in store for me. It is for you I am speaking, Elgiva. Think well ere it is too late.

"I will yield thus much, that if this strange pretender do really prove his tale and still sue for your hand it shall be granted if you are fully determined on the rash sacrifice. If not, Prince Charles will gladly fulfil his engagement to one who even then will be a fairly dowered heiress, and we will forget in other lands that Chetwode with its miserable history still exists. But, Elgiva, I still warn, I still entreat you to listen to my counsel. I can arrange all. I have so stipulated. Will you not give up this romantic fancy and let us shake off the very dust from our feet against this ungrateful land? Speak, my child, but think well ere you reply."

Elgiva did not think, because the whole reply to that momentous question had long since been given in her heart; but ere the count could have counted one revolution of the diamond-set clock on the chimney-piece her tones sounded calm, soft, and resolute in the quiet atmosphere.

"My father, I cannot hesitate, because the voice within me speaks so full and clear. I cannot give up him I love. Were he but the lowly born peasant I believed him to be I owe him twice the life which I desire to devote to him, and he has nature's true nobility in his soul. But as it is there can be no cause for such a sacrifice. He is more than

my equal now, and it is my pride and my pleasure to confess that fact. Father, there is but the noble, honest truth in my heart and his. He is the heir of our race, the head of our house. It is for me to assume his name, derive lustre from his rank, obey his will, take pride in his high qualities. I cannot hesitate. He is the sole love of my heart, the only man I can ever love, the only one I will consent to marry."

Count Arnheim sighed—a sigh well nigh like a groan. But he knew that it was all over now, he knew that his child had made her election—had spoken truth and woman's true spirit in her decision, and if there was that which he dared not confess to her, that which would have in all probability influenced her decision, it was all over now.

Elgiva must never know the dread secret of his soul, therefore he could not say to her the words that rose uppermost to his lips:

"Child, it must be as I will. All depends on your consent to be Prince Charles's bride, and for my sake give up the fancy of your young heart."

No, even he could not but confess that such an injunction would be too unreasonable to enjoin, and he was forced to pay the penalty of the secrecy that was his rôle.

"Then you shall have your will, my child," he returned, sadly, "at least, so far as is at all consistent with my honour and your own safety. Should all be satisfactory in the inquiries I am about to make I pledge myself to consent. Now leave me, my daughter. If all is as I think sufficiently proved as to the young man's birth he shall plead his own cause. Only, Elgiva, do not forget the father for the lover. Do not give up all because your heart has sanctioned the sacrifice."

The warm blush, the tearful smile, were the sole reply; but they were enough. No one could have desired more, not even an intended suitor. No one could have interpreted more unmistakably the meaning of the mute signs than the parent who fumed so painfully over the strong will of his child on that last lingering contest with her.

This scene had taken place some two or three hours before the moment when those rapid, firm steps came up the broad stairs that led to Lady Elgiva's apartment, bringing so deep a flash—such a fateful, doubting colour to her cheek and brow. Still, she chided herself for the unworthy suspicion.

"Juan"—yes, she could not relinquish that dear, familiar name—"dear Juan, you cannot be false!—unless, indeed, you have yourself been deceived; for your pretensions are true and your love as noble as the blood in your veins."

The beloved one thus addressed stood before her—not as she had erewhile seen him, in the humble if romantic garb of the gipsy tribe—not pale and helpless and suffering, as on the bed of sickness when she had tended him so carefully—but with his manly figure habited in the fitting garments of his age and station, his eyes sparkling with health and joy, his mien free and unfettered by a sense of danger and degradation.

She might have felt sympathy, gratitude, alarm for the Juan De Castro of her early dreams, her romantic, girlish love; but for this brilliant, noble, love-speaking ideal of the cavalier she had gazed at in old portraits, figured to herself in girlish dreams, she could feel naught but love—trusting, devoted, proud and happy love.

"Elgiva, my own at last!"

Such were the words that fell like music on her ear. Then came the fond, rapturous embrace, those soft, nameless whispers that are so foolish and so expressive, and after a while the pair composed themselves to somewhat more intelligible and deliberate conversation of their late experiences—the future fortunes of each and both.

"And my father has consented? I need hardly ask that, since you are here beside me," she asked, softly.

"Yes, thank Heaven, that painful ordeal is over!" he replied, fervently. "Elgiva, I would gladly have yielded up all, I would fain have buried the past in oblivion, so that I might have clasped you as my own to my heart. But that could not be. Your father pardoned me, Elgiva—was stern and resolute as a very Brutus. He conditioned for the clearest proof—proved that his daughter should never touch the hand of one who had not the pure and noble blood of the poor in his veins. Then came the test, the torturing, deep inquisition that brought pain to both—pain that even unquestionable proofs of the truth of my birth deprived him of what he had for such long years believed his own, and yet more pain that a parent's sin should have brought such widespread disgrace and misery on me and mine. But it is all past now, my beloved, and I have—have—but joy and love and brightness before us in our future."

"And you, you are Count of Arnheim then? It seems so strange, so incredible," she said, looking at him with a kind of childish astonishment.

"No, dearest, no. To you I am Juan still, if that name is softer, dearer in its sound and memories, and to the world I am 'Earl of Chetwode.' Let the ancient noble title of Count Arnheim still be the appanage of him who has so long borne it. I could never willingly assume it."

Elgiva's hand was in his now, her lips were smiling her grateful love and happiness, and the new-found earl's arm glided round her waist with the first privilege of authorized and open love.

But even as they thus sat in the delicious dream, from which they dreaded to awake lest the old painful realities should dawn upon them in fierce and lurid light, a faint tap at the door roused them from their indulgence.

Without even waiting for permission to enter the door opened and Marian Oliver walked into the room.

Lord Chetwode had risen from the seat he had but now taken on the large ottoman where Elgiva sat, but at the unlooked-for vision of the old domestic's return the girl sprang up suddenly to her feet in a terror for which she chided her own cowardice.

"Marian, this is scarcely becoming!" she said, with gentle dignity, that ought to have been more impressive than fiercer reproach. "You should have ascertained whether I was alone and disengaged ere you interrupted me. If you want to see me I will send for you presently."

"No, no," said Marian, shaking her head with an expression rather of sorrow than of anger. "No, poor child, that cannot be. 'Alone,' disengaged, alas!—alas! It was because I was but too certain that such could not be so that I hastened hither. It is for that I must remain and do my errand now ere it is too late. Oh, if you will but listen to me it will repay far more risk and fatigue and trouble than it has cost me to do the mission which I have imposed on myself. Earl of Chetwode, if that is your present title, Elgiva of Arnheim, as you may still claim to be called, bear my warning, set on my advice, ere it is too late for me to save you both from the destruction to which you are rushing blindly, madly, fatally!"

"Marian, you are surely mad," murmured Elgiva, fearfully, laying her own small white hand gently and persuasively on the woman's arm. "What can all this mean? You surely cannot know the truth, and yet but now you called him by his right name and title."

"Yes, yes, I know only too well," returned the woman, sadly. "Know far more than you do in your unreasoning blindness. Yet what can I hope or expect? I am but like her of old whose true and sacred words were never believed by those she

warned. You are young and innocent, but you, Lord of Chetwode, you have somewhat more experience, somewhat more knowledge of that which is around and before you. Will you not aid me? Will you not listen to my earnest, solemn words 'for her sake?'"

"Listen? Yes, assuredly that may be your right since I do believe that you are at least sincere in your frenzy, if such it is," replied the young man, kindly. "But for her sake," he added, significantly. "I would also entreat you to be cautious in what you say. She is too young, too delicate for more suffering than she has already undergone. See, even now it has told on her. There is scarcely the brilliant light in her eyes or the rich bloom in her cheeks that once mantled there. What danger can lurk in such a betrothal as ours?" he added, proudly. "Equal in rank, kindred in blood, with the full consent of her sole guardian, it is but idle importuning to stir this first hour of security and happiness."

"Oh, mad, mad that you are," returned the woman, earnestly, "as if that could avail when destiny is against you, when mightier powers than any earthly guardians are put in motion to guide your actions and your fate. I tell you that your union is impossible, that your only chance of safety is to tear yourselves apart, to relinquish all such vain hopes, give up the romantic fancy that has thus misled you, and yield to the ties that are already arranged for you by the rulers of your future career. Children, be advised, be warned, for your very fates are sealed as only the fell and ruthless masters of destiny can accomplish."

"Woman, you are, you must be mad!" said Lord Chetwode, angrily. "Do you think it possible that we should listen to such ravings, and give up the happiness and love that are the dearest blessings we enjoy on earth for such vague rant?"

"Hush, hush!" she said, in a low, awe-struck voice. "It must not, cannot be that you—your Juan De Castro—can forget all the past. There surely might be enough to give weight to my words in your own experience. Lady Elgiva, be true to the vocation of your eyes. Guard this unhappy lover of yours from his own insane folly. Bid him give you up. Tell him that you will not accept the sacrifice, that all is over, and that you will live happy apart rather than risk such mad torture."

Elgiva hesitated.

It was not in generous woman's nature to thoroughly refuse such an appeal. She had secretly counted enough to dash the cup of happiness from her lips, to condemn Juan to such misery, and yet it was thrilling, terrible to hear and see such dark forebodings.

"Juan," she said, timidly, "if you have the least credence for this strange tale, if you believe that danger does indeed await our betrothal, then I am ready, willing to sacrifice all for your sake. I would not that you should suffer one pang for me, dear Juan."

There was one quick gasp in her young bosom as she pronounced these words—one stifled sob that the lover's ear welcomed as the dearest proof of her heart's devotion, her generous truth.

"No, no—never," he said. "At least, not if you are fearless and brave, my Elgiva. I will endure all for you, since I should know only misery apart from you. Woman," he added, turning to Marian Oliver with a calm decision that she could scarcely misinterpret, "we are willing to believe in your sincerity and to thank you for your warning, but our election is made. Whether for happiness or misery, safety or danger, we will endure it together. Let us enjoy in peace the rich blessings of each other's love. Heaven is above all, and it alone can ever raise each evil as you threaten. Leave us in our hour of happiness; we have surely suffered enough ere it came."

Marian looked at them with a half-admiring, half-pitying expression in her strong features.

"Alas! alas!" she said, "it is the old, old tale that has been so often acted, so dearly rued. Oh, when will hearts make a wise choice? When will the curse depart from the youth and beauty of this world—that makes the sweetest enjoyment but the bitterest misery of life? Children, once more pause ere you decide. Mark you, I have risked much to give you even this dark warning. I might even lose the little power that is left me of averting the doom that is impending if my movements are watched and their object be discovered. Yet I will wait, I will give you yet a brief space, if you will, to make your decisions, to think more calmly of the future."

Elgiva and her lover exchanged glances.

They felt that Marian spoke from her heart. There was neither deception nor weakness in her look or tone. And in that brief instant they felt that they were perhaps bringing doom on their heads, a ruthless enemy, and, as Juan too surely knew, one swift and sure and secret in its revenge. But the very love and beauty that each read in the other's eyes, the very sympathy of hearts that brought that conscious-

ness decided them not to risk a more certain and lifelong desolation by the separation of which Marian spoke.

"Elgiva, my beloved, speak," said the young lord, gently taking the fair girl's hand in his, "what shall it be? Shall we yield to this dark warning, or shall we live and die together?"

Elgiva's lips moved almost ere her lover finished. "We will live or die together," she said, fervently. And Marian, with a picture of melancholy despair, clasped her hands together and passed from the room without farther word or comment on the issue of her visit.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

They took me from the miller's back;
A weary woman scarce alive;
Some muttered words his comrade spoke.
He placed me underneath this oak;
He said they would be quiet in haste;
Whether they were I cannot tell.

LENA FANTHO and her helpless companion sat for a few moments awaiting the first words that Harold might speak to explain his sudden advent, but he did not appear in any haste to make known his errand.

His brow was dark and gloomy as he surveyed the two females, both so fair and so helpless, and one so young and so innocent of any word or deed of wrong.

Lena could scarcely restrain a faint cry as she first perceived the entrance of one who had ever been an object of dread and repugnance to her from her earliest childhood.

But the very emergency of the occasion, and the helplessness of her whom she had undertaken to protect and save, gave her courage, and she was the first to speak.

"Uncle," she said, "what does this mean? You have startled this poor invalid, and she can ill bear such shocks. She is unused to the presence of strangers."

He gave a half-convulsed laugh. "Strangers," he said, "strangers! Poor, silly child! To her there is little that is strange in me, or ought not to be. Long ere you opened your eyes on the light she knew and affected to love and cling to me as her best support and friend."

Lena started painfully. "Uncle—it cannot be—you do not mean that she—this hidden one—is—your—wife?"

He laughed again that hateful, taunting laugh.

"No," he said, "no. That would have been a queer idea in any case; quite out of my reckoning, I should guess, or any one else's. No! But still she is one who has a claim on me, and I will not see her injured with impunity; although," he said, "although—mark me, child—there has been foul play; yes, foul and unaccountable, and more especially in the concealment of this poor unfortunate for long, long and useless years. But it is past, and it is of the future we must think. Lena, I have come to remove her and you from this lonely and desolate place."

The girl recoiled with instinctive horror.

"Uncle, that cannot be. I have promised, yes, solemnly promised one who, I am certain, has power to control the actions of this unfortunate one, who has from her own showing, tended her for many long years with care and tenderness, I have given my solemn word that I would keep and hold her in safety till her return. And I would lose life rather than forfeit that plighted troth."

"Foolish child, this is mere idle raving!" said the man, with a sneer, that even Lena could see was more affected than real. "Pray, what is to hinder me from carrying out my intentions, if only by force? I though I confess that would not at all comport with either my wishes or my convenience. But now let us talk a little more reasonably," he added as he saw the white and rigid form of the invalid, and watched the looks of mute terror that glared from her large eyes. "There, Tessa, do you not know me? Will you not give me a welcome?" he added, turning to the invalid's couch and holding out his hand. "It is long since we met, but you surely cannot have forgotten old times or the features of your old play-fellow, Harold? I am scarcely more changed than you are, and yet I should have known you anywhere, Tessa."

She shrank, and cowered as it were into her cushions, and within the coverlet over her wasted form muffled the hand he would have taken.

"Harold, Harold! No, no; it cannot be! No, do not kill me! Have pity—have pity," she cried, imploringly, "I could not help it. Do not kill me! It was wrong, very wrong; but then I loved him and he spoke so fair and looked so sweet and tender and you—you—"

"Had more truth and more roughness about me: that was it—eh, Tessa?" he said, though as she spoke his brow contracted and his lips were compressed with some inward and suppressed emotion. "Well

well, that is only a long, long, past tale, but it is not played out yet, the last act of that old, oft-repeated drama—not yet, not yet; though vengeance has been at work for many weary years, it has not done all that is fitting for honour and for punishment."

Then, rousing himself from what appeared to be rather a monologue than a speech intended for his companions, he resumed, in a somewhat lighter tone:

"Well, Tessa, it is I, yes, my own self. I have never forgotten one who once was dear to me with all her faults and weaknesses. Once more we meet, once more I am here to control and guide your wayward course; poor, unhappy one. I have come to take you from this place, Tessa."

She gave a quick, sharp cry.

"Whither," she exclaimed, "whither? Tell me, Harold, tell me truly. Is it to him? Has he sent for me at last? Shall I go to him?"

Her frame absolutely thrilled as the small hand was laid on his, and the wan face gazed up with an eagerness that recalled some of its former bloom and beauty to the sunken cheeks and hollow eyes.

"Yes, yes," he said, in the tone of one who would pacify a wayward child. "You shall go to him, if you are good and submissive—not otherwise, mind. I promise you that, and I never broke my word for good or evil. Ay, friends and enemies alike may confess that," he added, sternly. "Rugged and rude and fierce as Harold Farino may be, there is small hope for his foes and fear for his friends so far as his frown goes."

"And she—will she come too?" returned Tessa, glancing to Lena.

"She will! That is arranged," was the reply.

But the girl once more interposed her own.

"Uncle, did I not tell you that it could not be, that I would never consent with life to betray the trust reposed in me? If Marian—since I know her by no other name—if Marian will authorize it I am content. I will not move, save by force, without that certainty. Uncle, you know in your inmost heart that I am right, and that it is but your own nature, as you said but now, to keep such a pledge."

"You are sharp and shrewd, lass," returned Harold, tauntingly, "but withal you do not see the difference between a lord and a slave. It is my pleasure that you and this unlucky female should go to the spot I may appoint. You are my ward, and I your lawful guardian. If I command the onus of right and wrong is on my shoulders. If you disobey, you might chance to be called to account for resisting legal authority. And, as to this poor sufferer, let it be enough for you to know that she was once dearer to me than any other living being, and that the rest of my life—I mean that which has elapsed since I knew her fate—has been spent in a deep, dark remorse and revenge. I am but a despised gipsy—you are but one of that same race," he went on, bitterly—"but yet, but yet the fierce passions of the East and the strict morality of the Arab are still instinct within us, as the cold and sensual profligate may find to his cost."

There was a stern dignity in the man's manner that for the moment elevated it above all the taunting passion, the debasing revenge that was his habitual mien.

Lena had perhaps never respected or yielded more implicitly to her guardian's doctrine of right and wrong so temptingly as in that dream of absolute power and right which he set forth as her code of woman's submission.

But still, still the noble instinct of truth and duty was too strong within her for such compliance.

"Uncle," she said, "did you not forfeit your rights over me when you abandoned me to the power of a bad and unprincipled man and threw me in contact with any who chose to direct my path? I am free now—free to assume and fulfil the obligations that I have had forced on me. I cannot judge for you, but unless you confide in me the nature of the link between you and this poor sufferer and the woman who entrusted her to me I will never willingly be found wanting in the hour of danger and need. I will guard her with my life," she added, firmly; and, taking a few steps forward, she placed her slight form between Harold and the couch where Tessa lay, clasping the thin, white hands and casting her own fair arms round the wasted invalid as if for protection and support.

There was something so expressive, so brave and yet so gentle, so determined and yet so feminine in the whole attitude that even Harold, who came to scoff, remained to admire the pure and graceful usefulness of the girl he had ruled as his own.

"Girl, I believe I can trust you," he said, after a moment's pause. "You are scarcely one to betray where you will risk so much on truth and fealty. And if you will swear—nay, if you will but pledge your word—to keep the revelation secret, I will confide to you part of the reasons of my conduct, of the hidden past, that must ever influence so deeply the busy and

fleeting present. Will you do so, and learn from it the necessity for such unquestioning obedience as I demand?"

He stooped down for a few moments and whispered words in her ear that brought to her young and expressive face a rare combination of passing and feminine emotion. Shame, grief, surprise—ay, and sympathy too—were on that sweet, flushing face as she listened.

Yet a mingling of doubt seemed to banish the more powerful, gushing feelings thus excited.

"Uncle, is it true? Why, how can such things be? You have forgotten, surely, that Amice is your daughter, and that—"

"Her mother was my wife. Is that what you would say?" he rejoined, calmly. "Well, what then? It does not affect the truth of the past, as you may find when more years have rolled over your head. In any case, I tell you that the tale is true, and that it has affected not only my life but that of many another far more remote from the scenes in question. It is but for you to say whether you will now yield to my command; since the poor, shadowy creature's only chance of health or peace rests in my hands. Marian Oliver could not resist my power were she in the secret of the removal I contemplate. The agencies are too vast and powerful, the will too strong for her resistance; and the only difficulty would be that you would be severed from your charge. If she loves you, and clings to you, child, that separation would work her misery, if not death."

Lena guessed it but too well.

She could perceive how the clinging dependence, the reverence which Marian inspired had been transferred to her without the awe such a being as the proud and imperious Marian must inspire.

And in Tessa's shattered health and half-destroyed nerves such a wrench might well be fatal to life as well as peace.

"Uncle, you say you can be relied upon," she said, sharply glancing in his dark and troubled features. "Will you in your turn promise to absolve me to this same Marian, and to satisfy her it was not my treachery or cowardice that did the deed?"

"Yes, yes. She will know soon enough—soon enough," returned Harold, impatiently. "Only be quick, child, in your decision and your movements, for there are times when moments are equal to hours in their importance."

Lena needed no such injunction when once her resolution was taken.

It required, however, some time and patience to persuade the weak and fretful invalid that their departure could be thus arranged.

The habits of years were too strong to be thus severed, and she shrank like a trembling child from a plunge forward into darkness, at the idea of such a change.

But Lena's gentle voice and sweet accents, her persuasions and promises were at length prevalent over such terrors, and, ere another hour had elapsed, preparations were completed for their departure from their secret and yet luxurious asylum.

"There is a vehicle in waiting, and I myself will accompany you," said the gipsy chief, giving his powerful support to the faltering invalid. "Fear nothing, Lena. So long as you are brave and true the blood that flows in your veins shall be as sacred in my eyes as if you owed your birth to me and mine."

Without giving time to the girl to reply to the enigmatical hint he drew Tessa forward as if she had been a babe in his grasp, and passed through the aperture made by the secret panel from which he had appeared when he startled the invalid with his entrance.

There was a dim torchlight in the narrow passage into which they then entered that barely served to guide them on their way, and through that narrow avenue they rapidly passed till Harold opened a small portal at the end which revealed a staircase, up which a cold and sudden blast of air betrayed some opening with the outer world beyond.

Harold gave one low whistle as they reached the bottom of these steps, and ere many moments the muffled sound of wheels betokened some vehicle at no great distance from the spot.

There was a hasty interchange of words, followed by a lifting of Tessa's light form in a man's stalwart arms, then Harold took Lena's hand and they hurried forward a few yards, when, as her eyes became accustomed to the obscurity, the girl could perceive a carriage at a small side gate, into which they were quickly enclosed, and the silent and muffled feet of the horses took their swift way in the direction from which they had apparently come.

"Where am I? What has happened?" murmured Amice De Castro as she awoke from the heavy sort of trance in which she had lain long after the immediate danger of her wound had passed away.

She opened her large, brilliant eyes on a strange

but luxurious apartment as she spoke, and gazed round with a half-reasoning wonder that is so often the result of such a partial insensibility as she had suffered.

"You are safe with friends. You have been ill, but you are much better," said Marian Oliver, who sat by her pillow in calm but watchful attention.

Amice looked questioningly at her; then a dim memory, aided by a sense of sore pain in the injured limb, and the weakness that attended her slightest movement, recalled her to a fuller consciousness of what had happened.

"Marian, where is she—that cruel, hateful girl?" she said, resentment appearing to lend her strength.

"She is in her father's castle—or, rather, that which was deemed his, in company with her betrothed suitor," said the woman, calmly. "There, you will know all in time. Wait till you are well, fair child, then everything shall be explained."

"No, no; I will know now. I shall be fevered again if you keep me in such suspense," was the impatient response. "Who is her lover, and why do you speak of her father in that tone? Speak, if you would not drive me to frenzy again."

"Will you calm yourself and be good and quiet?" said the woman, firmly.

"Yes, yes, if you will but speak."

"But I shall have that to say which will cheer and cheer you," replied Marian. "What if I must say that he whom you loved is now in possession of title and wealth well nigh equal to the noble suitor whom you have at your very feet? Shall I tell you that he whom you once knew as Juan De Castro is a coroneted earl, with estates and wealth to gratify every wish, and that his cousin, the Lady Elgiva, is now his betrothed bride—an alliance approved by all as the best mode of sparing all difficulties and disgrace? That is what has happened since your illness. What would you more?"

Amice's eyes glittered through the swelling tears that sprang in them.

"False, deceitful fiend! and he dared to betray his vows to me! But it shall not be! Say that it shall not be; Marian, you can do all. You have said so many a time. You can guide with the strings of a puppet the actions of others." Marian, say you will stop this miserable bridal!"

The woman bent down and touched her brow with her lips.

"Perhaps," she said, "you are right to some extent. I have power, or, rather, those who guide me and mine can give me that power. Still, were it only to please you, only at your prayer and bidding, it would be in vain that you would plead. But it is probable that it will be as you desire. It is not in the book of fate that such a marriage should go forward to its end. It will be only through a miracle that its enemies can be defied. Yet, child, you said you would prefer wealth and station to Juan De Castro's love, while the heiress of Abraham would have given up all for his sake. Why should you grudge her that which you would have flung away as a worthless thing?"

The woman bent her eyes firmly on the girl for a reply.

"But I love him—I love him only. He scorned me and I would have triumphed over him," said Amice, eagerly. "Now it is different. It would be all for her and him—all triumph, pride. And you—you deceived me. Did you know of his birth?" she added, with an impatient start of the weakened frame.

"Perhaps. It is not for you to know," replied Marian, calmly. "It is enough that it is so, and that greater miracles yet may chance to be wrought if you are worthy the strange changes that may befall. But, Amice De Castro, I will but add this warning: if you would deserve what is perhaps in store for you, if you would take Elgiva of Arnhem's place, or enjoy her well-deserved happiness, then strive to copy her noble self-sacrifice, her fortitude, her warm and true devotion. Ay, there is a strange caprice," she murmured, "in these dispositions of destiny. Elgiva, Lena, the noble and the true and good, will suffer, and this vain, imperious child will mount on their fall—their misfortunes will be her joy."

"It will be so—it will?" pursued Amice, a feverish flush mounting to her cheeks. "He shall not marry her—that proud, hated girl, or I shall die or kill her."

Marian smiled half scornfully.

"It is in the blood, in the blood," she murmured. "Well, well, be at rest. That bridal shall never be."

(To be continued.)

A NEW ILLUMINATOR.—The new air-gas light has recently been exhibited to a large number of scientific gentlemen on the premises of the company in Change Alley, and apparently met with general approval. Afterwards a cold collation was served at the Cannon Street Hotel, under the presidency of Sir John Murray Bart., when Major-General C. Scott,

consulting engineer, read a report of the gas and the mode of its manufacture, from which it appeared that it is generated from gazogen produced by means of ordinary distillation from mineral oils. Atmospheric air is passed through the liquid compound, in which a small portion of resin, gum, or other hydro-carbons, has previously been dissolved. A very brilliant light, remarkable for its purity and softness, is produced in a few moments; whilst there is an absence of the disagreeable odours usually accompanying ordinary coal gas, with no necessity for storage, and a universality of application which is as suitable for a small dwelling-house as for a town. The gas exhibited was of a high illuminating power, and the cost to the consumer, it was stated, will be considerably less than that charged for the common coal article.

LORD DANE'S ERROR.

CHAPTER XLIV.

LORD DANE looked incredulous.

"Why should Vassar have given the papers to Cheeny of all others?" he asked.

"What? You do not comprehend yet?" the baron demanded. "Have you forgotten the figure I told you Lady Sybil saw enter the Maniac's Rest that fatal night—that figure which she took for her husband, who could not possibly have been there then? Can you not think of some one who in general contour and height might be taken for Volney seen under the shadow of waving trees at night, and looked at through the eyes of a jealous woman? Might not Cheeny?"

Lord Dane looked thunderstruck. Suddenly he advanced to the baron's side.

"Did Cheeny kill him?" he demanded. "Is that what you mean? Do you believe he did?"

"I do believe it. I am satisfied of it in my own mind. My suspicions have been toward him all the time. First, because he pretended to have forgotten me. I knew who he was—the son of that woman. His pretended non-recognition of me set me thinking; then I happened to catch a glimpse of his face when we were talking about who killed Vassar in Normandy you remember. If ever I saw guilt in any face I did in his then. I have been on his track ever since. From Mrs. Lorne, with whom I communicated immediately upon my return to England this time, I learned of the mysterious and extremely suspicious disappearance of Perdita Lorne. I instantly feared that you had some connection with that business. I have had detectives on your track and Cheeny's for the last six weeks. You have never left the house either of you without a man at your heels, and latterly we have had one posted in the house. He takes the place of a footman who is ill, I think."

"You are a bold man to come here and tell me this to my face," said Lord Dane, his dark eye flashing. "How could you suppose I knew anything of the identity of the real heiress?"

The baron looked at him steadily for a moment.

"You did know. You cannot deny that you did know."

Lord Dane cast down his eyes. The flush of shame dyed his cheek again.

"I hoped better things of you, Talbot Dane, I did indeed," said the baron. "After your generous and chivalrous espousal of Volney's desperate cause, after your frank and noble acceptance of his innocence of that foul crime and your oath so faithfully kept, I could not willingly believe that you would assist in this cruelty to an innocent, defenceless girl."

Talbot Dane was terribly agitated.

"I plotted no cruelty," he said, in a low voice. "I did consent to her being got away secretly to Rylands, but she has been treated kindly and served with luxury. I gave Cheeny money and orders to convert Rylands into a palace for her, so that he could make her contented to stay there. It's a villainous piece of business, of course. But it's very hard, baron, to have to surrender an earldom and estates such as these to an ignorant girl like that. Why should an exception have been made of the Danes more than any other of the noble families of England and the entail extended to a woman? But for that I should be Lord of Dane still."

"Perhaps not even then," Baron Chandos said, coldly. "Volney may be alive, or there is another contingency of which you ought to have thought. There may yet be an heir born."

Talbot Dane's cheek grew pale and a faint tremor moved his lips.

"Have you ever seen Perdita Dane?" Baron Chandos asked, slightly emphasizing the surname. "I have not."

"Come with me then to Rylands and you shall see a young lady of sweet and lofty and cultivated spirit—no ignorant girl, as you have been misinformed, and when you see to what your shameful and un-

manly contrivances have brought one who never injured you no reproaches from me will be needed to deepen your remorse and repentance. Pray Heaven we may not be too late!"

"Too late?" echoed Dane, huskily.

"Too late to prevent the accomplishment of some horrible treachery—what I know not. There is the telegram I received this afternoon."

Talbot Dane took the paper in his cold fingers.

"Come by the first train. It is life or death or worse I am afraid."

Dane looked up bewildered and terrified out of his bitterness.

"It cannot be," he said. "What can it mean?"

Baron Chandos bent a stern glance upon him.

"The man who has committed the deed I believe Nathan Cheeny has, merely to secure possession of the proofs of another's rights, did so with some ulterior purpose, which he will not relinquish without resorting to any further desperate measures at his command for the accomplishment of it. Cheeny has made you think he was working for you, when in reality it was for himself. I can think of no gain great enough to tempt him to the perpetration of murder but the one of marrying himself to the girl he believes to be the true Countess of Dane, and if, for the sake of that, he has done one murder why not another, or even a third?"

Talbot Dane's face grew suddenly rigid with horror.

"That is it," he cried; "he means to marry her. Idiot that I was not to see through him. Yet—his wife—that beautiful woman—I can't understand it. He seemed to worship her. Let us go, baron. My carriage is at the door. I was going to Rylands myself to-night. Though you may find it hard to believe it, I have been the most unhappy man in London ever since I despatched Cheeny on his infamous errand."

Baron Chandos had been looking at his watch again. He turned with him at once, and the two left the house together.

"Will you tell me," said Baron Chandos as they entered the carriage, "just what was the nature of Cheeny's errand as you commissioned him?"

"He was to obtain her signature to a paper by which she resigned in my favour all claim to the Dane title and estates on certain conditions."

He looked resolutely in the baron's face, though his own was scarlet and shamed.

"I mean to do the right thing now," he added, his voice faltering a little. "I want to win back your regard, baron, and my own self-respect. Whether you ever find the proofs or not, I resign from this moment all my claim to this position which I have dishonoured. I accept your assertion concerning the identity of your sister's child and her right to the coronet I have considered mine."

Baron Chandos extended his hand.

"I am glad to hear you say it," he spoke, gravely. "At what hour will we reach Rylands?"

"The nearest station is twenty miles away. We shall reach that before light some time—about three o'clock, I believe."

"My man will be waiting for us with a conveyance of some sort, doubtless."

They were in plenty of time for the train, and indeed had to wait.

They reached the station to which Dane had alluded a little after three.

Neither man nor carriage was waiting for them.

"It is very strange," said the baron. "I am afraid it means trouble."

He went out and made some inquiries, but could learn nothing, neither could he obtain a conveyance of any sort.

There was a fair going on in a neighbouring town, and every vehicle of any description seemed to have gone there the day before.

Meanwhile at Rylands, as Baron Chandos had surmised, a horrible treachery was being enacted.

Up to the previous evening Cheeny had made use of every argument, both of threat and persuasion, to bend Perdita to his wishes, but the spirited girl baffled him at every effort.

His rage grew as the days wore on, and he was as far as ever from the attainment of his desires.

Once the husband of the Countess of Dane and he fancied with unparalleled presumption the position would protect him from the penalty of his crimes.

"Money will do anything," he rashly said to himself, "and I shall have plenty of it then."

He was more like a madman than a sane one as the third day after his arrival came, and still he had not advanced in his wicked schemes.

He got desperate at last and summoned Mrs. Griff and Clever Dick to a conference in the gray-visaged old housekeeper's own room.

The three confederates met and looked each other in the face.

"Something has got to be done," said Cheeny, setting his lips in a hard line.

Clever Dick nodded his bushy head.

"The question is, what can be done?" he said, gloomily.

"Yes, that's the question," repeated Mrs. Griff, in her turn. "What can be done? You might tear her limb from limb, it's my opinion, and she wouldn't give in."

"She would if you'd never let her get away and go where she did," said Cheeny, with a shudder. "It's that she can't get over; you ought to suffer for it, both of you. I paid you well to do my work, and you did it very badly. It would have served you right if I had never given you a penny."

"You'd have got served out yourself in that case, captain," retorted Clever Dick. "You know you would. Better talk sense and stop grumbling. What do you want done next? Griff and I are ready, as long as you pay us our price."

Mrs. Griff chuckled hoarsely, and repeated his words:

"Yes, we're ready."

Cheeny gave them both a queer look, a stealthy, cat-like glance.

"We might have the whole job over before this time to-morrow if you two were not so particular, and in less than a week you should both have your money—a thousand pounds apiece, in gold or notes as you choose, and a thousand a year afterwards as long as you lived."

The faces of the man and woman both flushed with greed and eagerness.

"Who said we was particular?" cried Mrs. Griff. "Ain't we brought miss down to an inch piece of bread and a thimble of water a day? A bird couldn't keep in the breath of life on less. I hope she won't die on our hands, that is all."

The face of the evil-minded Cheeny darkened ominously.

"Once my wife, and she may die as soon as she likes. To think of being balked of such a splendid fortune after what I have gone through to get it, and to be foiled by a slip of a thing like that, it's enough to drive a man mad."

"What's your plan, captain?" demanded Clever Dick. "Tell it; we're tough ones."

Cheeny looked at them scowling.

"It's what I said," he uttered, in a low, hoarse voice. "Once my wife, if anything happened I shouldn't care."

Both Mrs. Griff and Clever Dick stared in a bewildered sort of way at him.

"But she ain't your wife," stammered Clever Dick, "and how the deuce—"

"The marrying is easy enough, it's what she may do afterward. She declares she'll give us all up to the law the first chance she gets, married or not."

There was a few moments' silence in which Cheeny furtively watched the absorbed faces of his two tools.

"How is the marrying easy enough, captain?" asked Clever Dick. "She has not agreed?"

"She's not agreed, I know, but it can be done nevertheless. If I can make her call me her husband in the presence of witnesses, I calling her wife in the same presence, the thing is done. Do you see? That's the law here."

Mrs. Griff and Clever Dick stared again.

"I have heard something like it," muttered Dick. "It's true, and I want you two for witnesses."

"Do you want us to witness to the truth or not, Mr. Cheeny?" demanded Mrs. Griff, bluntly.

"I want you to witness that she's my wife, no matter whether it's truth or the other. I mean to make it truth if I can by fair means or foul. Will you do it? Come, a thousand pounds don't grow on every bush."

The wicked man looked as though he might have come straight from the Prince of Darkness as he stood there tempting these two, who were bad already, evil already, but not so bad, not so evil as he. With his white, handsomely ringed hands, his fine clothes, his shining hair, his delicate features, and his wicked-expressed eyes, he looked like a handsome demon himself.

Neither Mrs. Griff nor Clever Dick hesitated at bearing the witness he wanted if it could be done safely.

But could it? Would not the wronged girl herself be able to refute their testimony? How was she to be hindered?

They put the questions in so many words to Cheeny.

He answered as plainly.

"If I can get her once to say what I want, I'll answer for the rest. If she thinks she's my wife once I can manage her, and I will. If that can't be done, if we have to swear to her saying what she has not said, the only way is to put her where she can't contradict us."

He looked them both in the face with hard, glittering, steel-cold eyes, and a white ring settled round the staring orbs of the two as his meaning came home to them.

"You won't murder her?" whispered Clever Dick.

scarcely able to articulate. "No, no, that would be hanging business, and sure to come back upon us!"

"Hanging business," answered Cheeny. "Would it be hanging business if we had nothing to do with it—if it was an accident, say?"

"Accident?" muttered Dick.

"Of course. Isn't this place Lord Dane's? Didn't he send the girl here? Isn't Mrs. Griff housekeeper here, and you the man-servant? Isn't old Grizzle her nephew, and considered harmless? If we left a certain door unfastened, and locked ourselves into certain other rooms, and Grizzle was loose, wouldn't we have to stay where we were till help came? Could anybody accuse us of anything that might happen in that case?"

Mrs. Griff and Clever Dick turned and looked at each other.

Then the eyes of both dropped and a sort of shudder seemed to creep over them.

(To be continued.)

FIGHTING WITH FATE.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE farm known as the Cyprasses, the only landed possession of Darrel Moor, and that, as the reader knows, a recent gift to him from his uncle, Lord Waldemar, was situated in the north-eastern portion of Huntingdonshire, and was as lonely and secluded as if it lay in the far desert of Sahara.

Such a gift from the noble and wealthy Baron Waldemar savoured strongly of satire and irony. All around it for a radius of many miles were dismal and dreary fens, where the water was stagnant and the air filled with malaria.

Three-fourths of the farm had been drained and afforded excellent pasturage for the short-horned cattle upon it.

The farmer's low stone house was upon this drained land.

The remaining fourth of the two hundred acres was still a rude and swamp-like fen, the abode of water fowl in great numbers. Stunted trees dotted its surface, and at its outermost boundary, where it adjoined the property of other owners, was a thick grove of willows and cypress trees, the latter so far predominating as to give a funeral aspect as well as a name to the place.

In the midst of this grove of cyprasses, approached by a paved road from the highway, but not to be seen from the farmer's cottage or from the public road, was a house.

It was an ordinary farmer's house, built of rough stone, two storeys in height—a square box with no break in its outline and without a gleam of picturesque charm save what possibly might be afforded by the small mullioned windows and the quaint stone porch.

The house wore a gloomy and neglected air, many of the windows having been boarded up upon the outside for years.

It had been for a long time uninhabited, bearing the reputation of being haunted.

A murder had once transpired in the grim old dwelling, and the horror of the deed continued to cling to the place, making it shunned and feared by all the people of the country side.

Even the farmer who lived at the farther end of the farm and was supposed to take charge of it visited the house as seldom as was compatible with his duty.

No tenant had been found sufficiently devoid of superstition to inhabit a dwelling of such evil reputation, but possibly the fact that it was situated in the midst of a death-breeding fen may have contributed to its avoidance.

Behind the house were kitchen-garden, stable-yard and stables, all enclosed by a high stone wall which abutted upon the house walls, affording a private enclosure for all these offices.

This then was the place to which Darrel Moor had caused his young bride to be brought. It was in one of the lower rooms under the steep, overhanging roof that young Honor Gilt had been immured by Bing and his assistants.

The valet flung himself down upon one of the high-backed settles in the low, ancient kitchen before the rousing wood fire, whose warmth and light filled all the room, while his daughter took possession of another.

Jacob Bing went out with the lantern to the stable yard to care for the horses, and Miss Bing bustled about to prepare breakfast for the newly arrived guests.

It was not yet light, and the rain was falling with a steady dreariness, promising to continue throughout the day.

Miss Bing drew out a square table and proceeded to lay the covers.

She lighted a candle and went into the adjoining

pantry, coming out quickly with a dish in her hand, upon which was a single cooked fowl.

She contemplated the interesting object in the greatest excitement, as if it had been some dangerous live creature.

"Look at that," she exclaimed, extending the dish at arm's length, and adjusting her spectacles that she might command a better view of it. "Look at that, I say. I could almost think I had lost my senses. Perhaps I'm dreaming—"

"I hope I'm not," said the valet. "The fowl's a decent specimen of its kind. Have you gone crazy, Judith?"

"Not yet, but I think I'm going!" said Miss Bing, in a theatrical voice. "Yesterday there were two fowls upon this dish, side by side. I roasted them in expectation of your coming. I saw them before I went to bed in my room upstairs, and now one is gone! Where is it? Where is it, I ask?"

"How should I know?" demanded Bing, lazily. "Direct your inquiries to the proper quarter. Probably Jacob got hungry in the night and ate it up."

Miss Bing shook her head incredulously.

"I know better," she said. "Jacob went to bed before I did, and did not get up until I called him. The house is certainly haunted. No human being carried off that fowl. The thief is the ghost who haunts this house."

"Nonsense," said Bing.

"Perhaps you know more about it than I do," said Miss Bing, sharply. "I say the ghost stole the fowl. And that is not all. I missed a loaf of bread the night before last. That was stolen before Jacob came. And the night before that I missed some cold roast beef and half a small ham and veal pie."

"Set a rat-trap and you'll catch your ghost," declared the unbelieving valet. "I don't believe in the ghosts that devour ham pie."

"You don't know it all yet," replied Miss Bing, with a slight sneer. "I repeat, there is a ghost in this house. It whispers through my keyhole at night."

"The wind!"

"It rushes through the attics," continued Miss Bing, with a glance of scorn at her brother. "It rustles through the halls. It displaces furniture. I've searched the whole house from attic to cellar and found no trace of it, but I know it is here. I am not superstitious. I have no fears of ghosts, but I am almost sorry we came to this house. What if the disembodied thing should rush out upon me from some dark corner?"

"What if the world should come to an end?" interrupted Bing, impatiently. "You say you are not superstitious, but you are. Fancy a woman of your sense talking about ghosts. You probably got up in your sleep and ate the pie, the bread, and the fowl your own self."

"Bones and all?" demanded Miss Bing, in a sarcastic voice.

"Very likely," replied Bing, exasperatingly. "A woman of your enterprize might do even that. I'll search the house to-day, and in the meantime I would recommend you to put your head in a poultice. Ghosts! Bah!"

The aggrieved Miss Bing set down her dish with a force that cracked it. Then in an ominous silence she proceeded to prepare the morning meal, producing a clatter that would have done credit to the activity of a dozen cooks in concert.

By the time the faint light came struggling in at the wet and dingy windows, and Jacob Bing returned from the stables, Miss Judith had prepared a tray with a small pot of tea upon it, a plate of buttered toast, and another of cold fowl, and taking a light in one hand and the tray on her arm she went up to the young prisoner.

Honor was pacing her floor in the firelight. She had removed her outer wrappings, and her long dyed hair streamed over her shoulders in wild disorder. Miss Judith set down her tray and light upon a small table near the door and abruptly retreated to the threshold.

"Is it light yet?" asked Honor, wearily, with a glance at the darkened window.

"It's just coming light," answered Miss Bing.

"There's a wooden shutter over your window on the outside, but the light will come in by-and-bye through the crevices and knot-holes."

"Who are you?" inquired Honor.

"I'm Judith Bing, his sister," said the spinster, nodding significantly in the direction of the kitchen. Honor's vivid eyes searched the woman's face with a gaze like that of an hour earlier, but there was no gleam of womanly pity or kindness in the sharp, harsh features or in the cold and speculative eyes.

With a sigh the young girl turned from this contemplation of the wooden-like face, and Miss Bing went downstairs to serve her family breakfast.

Honor drank her tea and ate her meal as a matter

of course. Then she walked to and fro over her floor for hours.

The light crept in dully in faint gleams and bars through the openings in the shutters, and the girl climbed her table and peered out through a knot-hole in the rough board against the window, but she saw nothing except the heavy gloom of some densely shading trees.

Once or twice she fancied she heard a rustling sound in Miss Bing's room, with which hers was connected by a door, and once or twice she fancied also that a faint, shrill whispering sound came through the key-hole of the hall door—a sound that was not made by the roving wind.

At noon Miss Bing brought up the young lady's dinner, and took away the breakfast tray. She appeared again at evening, with toast and tea and smoked salmon, and casually remarked that her brother had gone away and would not return for the present.

This information afforded Honor a great deal of relief. She feared the unscrupulous valet only less than she feared his employer.

Miss Bing returned to the kitchen with the dinner tray.

The valet reclined upon the settle, smoking a pipe. The evening had deepened into darkness, and the rain was falling ceaselessly and dimly.

Jacob Bing and Gusty, both disguised as gipsies, had just driven away on their return journey to Lancashire.

"Miss Gilt thinks it's you that have gone," said the spinster.

"So much the better," responded the valet. "She won't be so much upon her guard as if she thought me still here. Jacob and Gusty will make the night's journey—as I made that one of last night—unseen by any one. The rain will keep every farmer's lad indoors, and he'll be in Leicestershire before day, and not a soul will suspect that the waggon's been down here, or that he's not the same fellow that drove it before—although indeed I was scarcely seen by any one since leaving Holcombe Moor. It's been a pretty nice job, pretty nicely executed all through, Judith."

"When shall you leave also?" inquired Miss Bing.

"To-morrow morning before daybreak, if possible. I want to get off before the farmer suspects that you're not alone here."

"You could stay here a year and he'd not suspect it. How the furniture was ever taken care of I can't tell. When he brings the milk and fowls he refuses to enter the house, 'cause he's afraid of the ghosts,' he said to me very reluctantly when I pressed him hard. That story about the ghosts makes this the best hiding-place in England, for it keeps visitors away. Even the farmers avoid the road that leads past the Cyprasses. And if it wasn't true that there's a ghost here—"

"Bother! Haven't I searched the house to-day from top to bottom?" demanded Bing. "You are as foolish as unreasonable. Why, even Gusty has more courage than you."

"I have courage enough when I have to deal with beings of flesh and blood," said Miss Bing, with a shudder, "but when it comes to invisible creatures that mock one through key-holes and rob the pantry then I own I am afraid."

"Set a rat-trap and catch your ghost, that's all I can say. I have something of more importance on my mind than these petty bothers of yours. If I can get that marriage certificate to-night I'll be off before morning and walk to the nearest town. I shall disguise myself because the police may be on the lookout for me at the London terminus, and I shall not approach London from this direction. I shall make a long detour that will bring me in on the Dover or Brighton road. I am an old fox and not easily to be caught. And to make all extra sure I shall walk the last few miles and arrive in London on foot to make it appear that I have not been out of town. If I fail to procure the certificate to-night I shall do it to-morrow night. Sit down, Judith. We must devise a plan to get the paper from the girl's neck. She wears it in an oil-silk bag attached to a necklace."

The fellow conspirators engaged in a discussion of ways and means that evinced the highest ingenuity on the part of both.

Honor had been restless all day, and had for much of the time paced her floor, finding relief for her tortured mind in wearing the bodily forms. She drank her tea mechanically.

The candle burned out early. The fire was heaped up afresh, but burned dully, the moist air being very heavy.

A small bath-closet adjoined the chamber, and was fitted up inexpensively with a portable bath, and a pump by which water might be brought up from a cistern in the cellar. This water was very cold, but Honor pumped up a sufficient quantity for a bath, with which she refreshed herself.

She removed every particle of dye from her fair skin, which was found to have not been injured by the application, and washed out her long and wavy tresses of pale gold until the false blackness had been completely removed.

She was herself again, fair as a pearl, with golden hair all kinks and waves, and with dusky eyes that seemed fuller of midnight shadows than ever.

Miss Bing had procured from some ladies' furnishing establishment a supply of delicate under garments, with brushes and other necessities, for Miss Gilt, and Honor put on a frilled night robe and sat down again by the fire.

She had in her hand her necklace, to which were attached an onyx ball and the oil-silk bag to which the sharp-sighted Gusty had alluded in conversation with her father. She had put this necklace around her neck after the Hungarian countess had been conveyed from her room in a state of unconsciousness, and just before leaving Lady Thaxter's house upon her momentous journey to Bolton. The onyx ball was her choicest possession. The little oil-silk bag contained the certificate of her marriage to Darrel Moor.

She opened the bag to assure herself of the safety of the important paper, and then clasped the necklace around her neck under her gown.

She crossed the room in her bare feet and examined the hall door. It was locked on the outer side.

By the expenditure of considerable strength Honor pushed her heavy high-post bedstead against it. There was a second door, leading into Miss Bing's room. Honor pushed against this door-frame her heavy chest of drawers.

"The door goes into that room, so that it can be opened without difficulty," she said to herself. "But I must hear the woman if she pushes the chest of drawers. What object can she have in entering my room at night? It is well that I am a light sleeper, however. I shall awaken at the first sound."

She was more tired than she had thought. She went to bed, and was presently sleeping soundly, the sleep that comes to tired youth, deep and dreamless and refreshing.

It might have been an hour later that the door communicating with Miss Bing's room was softly unlocked, and swung ajar as noiselessly as if oiled, which it was undoubtedly.

Miss Bing's sharp face peered into the room over the chest of drawers, and retreated abruptly.

"She's asleep in the first sleep, which is always the soundest," Miss Bing whispered to her brother. "Now's our time. We must push the chest of drawers away slowly and very carefully. It's on wheels. Now for it."

The worthy pair put their shoulders against the obstacle Honor had placed in their way, and very gently pushed it forward upon the carpeted floor. It was soon removed sufficiently to enable the gaunt figure of Miss Bing to creep through into Honor's chamber.

The valet remained in his sister's room, watching intently. Still Honor slept on as tranquilly as a little child.

Miss Bing's feet were encased in yarn stockings, and her progress towards the bed was noiseless. The fire-light was brighter now, and its ruddy gleams fell full upon the bed and the lovely sleeper. The topmost button of the girl's night robe had come unfastened, and the frill had fallen away from the dainty throat, exposing a slender line of gold.

"The necklace!" thought Miss Bing, her eyes gleaming.

She put out her bony finger and softly unbuttoned the second fastening of the pretty gown, and drew away the frill, leaving bare a patch of white and tender throat, and exposing the little bag of oil-silk. She had her scissors in her pocket; she produced them and cut loose the little packet, clutched it tightly in her hand.

"Bravo!" whispered Bing, peering in at the open door, his evil face thrown into relief against the light background.

The young sleeper turned restlessly on her pillow. Miss Bing began a swift retreat, her eyes fixed upon the bed. At the third step her scissors fell to the floor with a clanking sound.

In an instant Honor was awake. "She sprang up in her bed, her wild gaze falling upon the retreating figure. Her hand flew to her throat; it sought the packet of which she had been robbed."

Miss Bing held up the little bag, waving it in triumphant delight.

"It's here!" she exclaimed. "I've got it. You slept so soundly, miss!"

She retreated behind the chest of drawers into her own chamber.

The valet thrust his sinister face forward again into view and relief. He caught the packet from his sister and flourished it exultantly.

"All is fair in love and war," miss," he exclaimed. "I shall take this paper to my master. It is of the utmost importance to him. I leave this house within an hour on my tramp to the station. You've fought it out well, miss, but you are fairly beat at last."

He closed the door with a slam, and looked it. About an hour later he left the house on his secret return to London and Darrel Moor.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It must not be supposed that Sir Hugh Tregaron had been idle during these days of Honor's scorn and enforced journeying down into Huntingdonshire. He had been most active and indefatigable in his search for her.

He had summoned from London one of the most efficient of the Bow Street officers, and had stimulated him to the utmost exertion by the promise of a princely reward when he should have restored Honor to her friends.

He had incited the local police to search Bolton thoroughly, and had the police of Manchester and Liverpool also on the look-out for the missing girl.

He had visited and questioned Mrs. Gilt and her daughter, and had assured himself that Miss Milner was not the author of the false telegram which had brought Honor to Bolton.

He questioned every cabman in the town, including the one who had lent his vehicle to Bing, but had failed utterly to obtain any satisfaction.

No suspicion attached to any particular cabman.

The man who had taken Mrs. Early and Honor to the Red House, and who had been dismissed by the disguised Bing, clearly proved his own innocence in the matter. The police believed the cabman to have come from another place.

Mrs. Gilt denied all knowledge of the "Irish servant" who had dismissed Mrs. Early's cabman, and affirmed that she kept no man-servant, unless the boy in buttons might be so termed.

Bing's precautions had been so well taken, his disguise was so perfect, his movements so well planned and timed, that no one—not even the police—heard aught of a gipsy wagon which was travelling swiftly by night to the south-east.

Not a clue could be found to the missing girl.

The cab in which she had been taken away, with its apparently intoxicated driver, had been seen at Four Lane Ends on that eventful night, and was then directed, as it seemed, toward Holcombe Moor; but it was not traced farther.

Beyond Four Lane Ends it might have been swallowed up in the earth like Korah and his hosts, for all trace that remained.

Upon the third day after Honor's mysterious disappearance Mrs. Early, heart-sick and nearly ill, travelled back to London with poor Lucky Bannier, whose anguish at the loss of her young mistress was terrible.

The girl asserted, and persisted in the assertion, that Miss Honor had been murdered.

Some of the police officers, impressed with her belief, had echoed it.

A search of the river and canal was instituted, but of course without avail.

Mrs. Early found Lady Thaxter quite worn out with excitement.

Telegrams were arriving twice a day from Sir Hugh Tregaron, bearing the message "No trace yet," and her ladyship was constantly replying to them.

By the utmost care upon the part of Sir Hugh and his Bow Street official, the affair had been kept out of the newspapers.

Lady Thaxter shrank from publicity, and did not even inform Lord Waldemar fully upon the subject. Perhaps in this she was guided by a wish not to betray her distress to the one who might have occasioned it, namely Darrel Moor.

The Hungarian countess had been electrified at the tidings of the young girl's disappearance. She had shut herself up in her own room for half a day, but at the end of that period had ordered a carriage, and appeared in street costume, pale, but calm and resolute.

Without saying anything of her intentions to Lady Thaxter, she drove directly to Bow Street and sought the services of an able officer, to whom she told the circumstances of Honor's disappearance, adding:

"I have reason to believe that this young lady has an enemy in Mr. Darrel Moor, nephew of Lord Waldemar, and I think the easiest way to find her may be to watch him. Let him be kept under a constant surveillance, day and night; also his valet Bing."

"It shall be done, my lady. Both shall be shadowed faithfully."

The countess paid a retaining fee, and drove back to Park Lane, convinced that she had taken a most necessary step, and the only one that could lead to success.

Every morning thereafter came a sealed note to her address with the report of the detective, and each time it was to the same effect. Darrel Moor was at his uncle's house, went to his club, drove or rode in Hyde Park with his uncle's horses, and dined with a friend, but there was no light gained to the mystery of the young lady's disappearance.

Upon the fifth day the contents of the note varied from those that had preceded. The man Bing had been found living in an obscure lodging, which he had engaged a week before.

The detective had disguised himself as the landlord's agent, sent to examine the house; and in looking through Bing's room had managed to ingratiate himself with the valet, who had been turned off by his master, Bing said, a week before.

The valet appeared distressed at having lost his situation, and was on the point of going back to his late employer, to humble himself and beg to be taken again into favour.

The detective had studied the valet very closely, and believed him honest. The detective had also questioned the other lodgers in the house, and those who knew of the existence of Bing were ready to affirm that he had not been away from his lodgings during the week.

The astute detective might have altered his opinion of Bing's honesty could he have seen that worthy directly after his own departure from the house.

"That a landlord's agent!" muttered Bing. "Not much. He's too inquisitive for a business man short of time. The minute he asked me if I was an old lodger here, and could tell him about the plumbing arrangements, I knew his pedigree. I know them Bow Street fellows. I suspected Sir Hugh Tregaron would get one after me. Lucky I didn't go to Park Lane when I came back from Huntingdonshire. Lucky I took every precaution possible. Lucky I let my friend Dart, who's out of a place, occupy my room of nights during my absence, making everybody in the house believe I was here. They'd swear that I've not been away a single night, if necessary. I think now, considering the way I put it to the detective, otherwise agent, that I may safely visit Park Lane this evening. Mr. Moor must be getting nervous."

Accordingly that very evening Bing, with the oil-silk packet on his person, made his way to Park Lane.

As he approached the Waldemar mansion he beheld Darrel Moor coming lightly down the steps.

A man was lounging near the house, looking in an opposite direction, apparently waiting for some one.

Bing took his measure directly.

"Another detective," he said to himself. "And, as it happens, I've got to meet Mr. Moor within a trice of him. It's too late to turn back. Mr. Moor means to speak to me. If my master is sharp enough, we'll get through yet and hoodwink all Bow Street at the same time."

With some misgivings as to his master's course, and feeling sure that any attempt to warn Moor would bring suspicion upon them, or rather deepen it, he took off his hat humbly, and drew nearer to him.

As he had foreseen, he encountered Moor at a point not five feet distant from the lounge, whence back was turned toward them, and he seemed impatiently awaiting an arrival.

Moor did not give his valet time to speak, but addressed him immediately, with considerable sharpness:

"Is that you, Bing? Have you found another situation yet?"

"No, Mr. Moor, no sir," stammered Bing. "I was just coming back to see if you would kindly overlook my insolence and give me another chance."

"I said that you wouldn't soon find a master as kind to you as I have been," said Moor, carelessly. "If you think you can behave yourself why you can come back. Go up to my room and put my things in order. I will see you when I get home from my club."

Moor sauntered on, the picture of elegant ease, handsome and smiling, apparently without a care or anxiety.

Bing procured admittance into Lord Waldemar's house, told the servants he had been dismissed by his master the previous week, but had now been restored to his former position, and finally went up to Moor's room.

The lounge in the street followed Moor at a distance, seeing him to his club.

"It all looks fair and above-board," the detective thought. "I am inclined to think that Mr. Moor and his man Bing don't know anything about the girl. She's beautiful. No doubt she has other admirers. We are perhaps wasting time upon the wrong track. Still, if my lady says so, we can keep a watch on Mr.

Moer a week or two longer. He is innocent or he is the artfullest man in the world."

The proposition was not unreasonable.

Darrel Moer came home at the usual time that evening, lingered an hour in the drawing-room with the ladies, and finally ascended to his own room.

Bing was stretched out upon a couch. He arose as his master locked the door.

"I suppose you know that that street longer was a detective, Bing?" exclaimed Moer. "I have been 'shadowed' by the fellow in a dozen disguises during the past week. The only news I have heard of your movements has been through Lord Waldemar's remarks and the presence of that detective who follows me everywhere. I am glad you did not write and that you did not return before. I gave out that I had discharged you."

"Our stories agree then. I told a detective to-day that I had been discharged, but was coming back to humble myself," said Bing.

"Well, what luck?"

"The valet, holding up the oil-silk packet."

Darrel Moer seized it and tore it open.

The certificate of his marriage to Honor Gilt fell out upon the floor.

He picked it up, read it carefully, and laid it upon his fire.

It flamed up and burned to an ash.

"So perishes the last scrap of evidence of that foolish marriage!" muttered Moer. "I was impatient until I had contracted it, but even while I stood at the altar I repented of my folly. I cannot imagine how I ever threw myself away upon a nameless, penniless girl. Well, the marriage is now dissolved. At any rate I defy the girl, and Tregaron too, to prove it."

"She is very beautiful," said Bing.

"As beautiful as an angel!" said Moer. "My affection for her begins to revive now that she is no longer a clog upon me. Where is she?"

"At the Cyprresses. My sister guards her. Is she to remain there, sir?"

"Until after my marriage with Miss Floyd, yes. How much longer I can't tell. I am not quite certain as to my disposal of her. Are you sure she is safe—that you have not been traced to the Cyprresses—that you left no clue? The detectives are very keen, and Tregaron is all alive in his eagerness to find the girl."

Bing replied by narrating in what manner he had conducted the forcible transfer of Honor to Huntingdonshire.

Moer was enraptured with his skill and ingenuity.

"I can take lessons of you, Bing," he said. "You'd make a first-class detective. They ought to have you on their list in Bow Street. We'll keep away from the Cyprresses till the search has blown over. Meanwhile my courtship here is prospering finely. We'll let matters run. Eat, drink and sleep as if you were under surveillance. We'll have then but little to fear."

Moer adopted this precept for his own guidance. Every word he said, even to Lord Waldemar, was duly weighed and considered.

Upon the day succeeding the return of Bing to Park Lane Lady Thaxter received a despatch from Sir Hugh Tregaron that a young lady, answering in most particulars to the descriptions of Miss Gilt, had been seen at Liverpool, and he had gone to that town to follow up the clue.

A later despatch announced that the clue was a false one, that the young lady bore no resemblance to Honor, and that Sir Hugh had seen her.

Similar false clues were discovered and followed during the week that ensued, but the right clue was not found.

Darrel Moer and his man Bing in London were "shadowed" in all their goings out and comings in, but to no avail.

In the course of a fortnight the Bolton police were confirmed in their belief of Honor's death, and a newer mystery arising in London, calling upon the ablest man of the force for their efforts in its elucidation, the officer employed by the Hungarian countess begged her to suffer the mystery of Miss Gilt's disappearance to remain in abeyance, to be taken up at some future time, declaring that he could not make headway in his attempts to solve it at present.

Accordingly the "shadows" were removed from the paths of Darrel Moer and his servant.

"It seems to be left to me to study out the matter alone," said Lady Rothmere to herself. "But there is Sir Hugh Tregaron, who may be able to help me. I'll direct his researches. I know that Honor is living. I know that I shall find her."

Sir Hugh returned to London opportunely, but so exhausted by his labours of the day and night that the Hungarian countess forbore to set him upon a new search until he should have become thoroughly rested.

He was pale and thin and worn, and his grave, sad eyes had in them at times a look of unutterable longing.

"It is nearly three weeks since Honor disappeared," Sir Hugh said to her ladyship and his aunt. "My poor little girl! Where can she be? She must think I have abandoned her. She is not dead. That I feel with the force of conviction. But where is she? Into whose hands has she fallen? Is Darrel Moer concerned in her disappearance? He is—he must be! I'll see him to-morrow and wring the truth from his false throat."

But fate had contrived to thwart Sir Hugh's design.

That very evening Grimrod, who had spent the three weeks which had elapsed since Miss Floyd's betrothal to Moer, in Yorkshire, appeared at the Waldemar town house, and had a private interview with Moer.

The substance of the interview was contained in this remark, from the lips of the Mephistophelian manager:

"You've resided in this parish long enough to render your marriage here valid, Mr. Moer. I have to go down into Surrey on some business for my lord, and I shall be absent for three days. I leave town in the morning. This is Tuesday. I shall be back on Friday. Suppose you get out your licence on Friday, and marry Miss Floyd on Saturday, allowing me to be present at the marriage ceremony?"

"The time suits me perfectly well," said Moer, "better than an earlier day. The truth is I am not feeling well to-day. I fancy I have taken a cold. It is settled then that I am to be married on Saturday? I will speak to Miss Floyd to-night."

He did so, finding her well pleased to hasten on the clandestine marriage.

She agreed to accompany him to church on Saturday morning.

Several times during the evening Moer incidentally mentioned that he felt ill.

He retired early in consequence of indisposition, as he said, and once in his room rang a sonorous peal for Bing.

His valet appeared.

"Look the door, Bing," said his master. "The day of my marriage is fixed for Saturday of this week."

"I congratulate you, sir."

"On the fortune I am getting for myself. I shall be a rich man, Bing, and I shall not forget your services. I must see Honor before I marry Miss Floyd. An impulse has come over me to visit her, and I always obey my impulses. It won't be so easy to get away after marriage as before, I fancy. The detectives have been drawn off my track, and I know a disguise in which I could even pass them if I liked without risk of discovery. I can go and return in twenty-four to thirty-six hours. You must give out that I am not feeling well. I have prepared the way for such an excuse by saying to-night that I am ill, and you must keep my door locked until my return. Remember to let no one in on any pretence whatever."

Bing gave the required promise.

A little later, that same night, Darrel Moer slipped out of the area-way of his uncle's house, skilfully disguised to represent a certain frequent visitor of Bing, a relative, an elderly man with a patch over one eye, a long wig, and a stooping gait.

No one would have recognized, in the accurate copy of a real personage, the graceful and handsome Darrel Moer.

And, unrecognized and unsuspected by friend or foe, Darrel Moer proceeded to Huntingdonshire by a night train, booking himself for the station nearest the Cyprresses, and finishing his journey on foot.

When Sir Hugh Tregaron arrived at Lord Waldemar's residence, worn yet resolute, with the fire of determination in his gray eyes, he was assured by Mrs. Watchley that Mr. Moer was ill in his room with sick headache, and could see no one.

The young Cornish baronet hesitated and reflected.

"I won't tell Lord Waldemar till his nephew's guilt is proved beyond all cavil," he thought. "He suffered enough through his son. I'll spare him all pain as long as possible, even as Lady Thaxter and Lady Rothmere have done. But I'll meet Moer face to face and know the truth."

He hastened to take his departure, returning home.

(To be continued.)

SHOWY PLANTS FOR GREENHOUSE.—The following are all adapted for a cold house where the frost can be kept out. A layer of bass mats, two thick, with some waterproof material laid over to keep them dry, will keep out a great deal of frost. A small suspension stove will keep out all the frost that comes if the house is covered as described. The following is the list of plants, viz.—Genista, azalea, camellia, rhododendron, kalmia, erica (these should be left to the nurseryman's choice), herba-

ceous calceolarias, cinerarias, primulas, veronicas, solanums, lilioms, Solomon's seal, the finer kinds of variegated ivy during the winter, and tulips, hyacinths, narcissi, ixias, crocus, some irises, and a great many of early-blooming alpine. If the house could be fitted up with virgin cork, a very fine effect could be produced with ferns, alpine, and bulbs; and in summer various bedding plants, annuals, etc., could be brought in and mingled with the ferns, and the house would then look well for five or six months with little trouble.

THE STEADFAST HEART.

THE pleasant golden afternoon wore slowly away, the slant sunbeams that gilded the gray old walls of Haslehurst and lighted up its fair elm-shaded lawns and touched the distant woodlands with a golden glory, had never made the prospect seem fairer.

It was an hour attuned to friendship's deepest, holiest chords—a time when two hearts in whose fountains the waters of sympathy had been for long years slowly mounting to the brim, and now stood rounded to their utmost level, would be sure to overflow.

Up and down the garden walk strolled a young man and woman in deep and earnest converse.

Marie Imboden was the heiress of Haslehurst. She was twenty years old, tall, well formed, with a face that was interesting rather than beautiful, yet a certain grace in her manner, a silver accent in her speech, a rare and indescribable sweetness in her smile, made her very attractive.

Her companion was Ralph Innesley, her father's ward, and during the past five years her own firm and most intimate friend.

Ralph was scarcely handsome, and yet he was something more than handsome—intelligent, resolute, distinguished. He had been liberally educated, had seen something of the world, but still, looking in his face, one felt that there were deep lessons in life which he had yet to learn.

During the years he had been Sir Charles Imboden's ward he had been occupied in finishing his collegiate studies, and had spent his vacations mostly at Haslehurst, so that the friendship between him and Marie was one which stood just within the pale of those conventionalities which do so hedge about true souls and for ever threaten their sweetest experiences with rankling thorns.

Sir Charles Imboden had a well-founded confidence in both, and they enjoyed all the freedom of a brother and sister; yet both were aware that a different chord vibrated in either heart from any which mere relationship could strike.

Just now their conversation turned upon an anticipated event which had for the last week produced a vague stir, a feeling of coming change all through Haslehurst.

"Do you know," said Ralph, "I dread this arrival very much? These autumn weeks have been so delightful to me, all things about us seem attuned to such perfect harmony, that I cannot bear to think of a disturbing element."

"But I do not think that Irmie will prove to be that," said Marie. "At least I trust she may not. Her life has been so sad, and she seemed from her letters so in need of a little quiet rest, of an opportunity to gather up her scattered forces, and make herself ready for the conflict which seems to await her in life, that I could not do otherwise, it seemed to me, than to ask her to spend the winter with us."

"Do you fancy she is a woman ever to make a very great fight in life? From the little I have seen of her I candidly confess I think she will manage to shirk most of those responsibilities which she would find irksome."

"Why, Ralph," said Marie, "I am surprised at your language. Irmie has always seemed to me a woman of strong character—indeed, of some very fine and rare traits. I confess I cannot exactly see how she is to make them available to earn her living, but I think she will devise some way. As to Irmie Brevoort being a shirk there seems to me a manifest incongruity between the two ideas."

Ralph laughed.

"Well," he said, "of course you would never put it in that way, but Mrs. Brevoort has none of that steadiness of purpose or that strong self-reliance which yet are as modest and womanly as anything can be and which make you the wonderful creature you are."

"Ralph," she said, "there is no room for such speeches between you and me."

"You think me insincere?" he exclaimed. "I was truly never more in earnest in all my life. I sometimes think, Marie, that, dear as we have been to each other all these five years, you do not yet comprehend all that you are to me."

A faint flush overspread her cheek.

"Rather," she answered, "I comprehend what I am not to you since you must needs praise me to my face."

"Marie," he said, with a little touch of indigna-



[RALPH'S RETURN.]

tion in his voice, "I had no thought of praising you. I stated what seemed to me the simplest and most apparent fact when I said that Mrs. Brevoort was not a woman of your stamp, but something to my sense far inferior. Attractive idiosyncrasies, fascination, even some strong determinations of character, I do not deny her. But for steadiness, for harmony, for thorough womanhood, she can never be the peer of one who shall be nameless since you are so sensitive."

He looked down into her eyes with a bright smile which made her heart glad.

"Oh, Marie," he said, "the fortune that lost me my father was not altogether cruel, since losing him I found you."

What more he might have said she never knew, for at that moment they saw in the distance the avenue gate swing open to admit a carriage, and they both knew that Irmie Brevoort had arrived.

"As papa is not here," said Marie, "you must help me to welcome her."

So they walked side by side around the house to the front piazza, which they reached just in time for Ralph to open the carriage door and hand out the visitor.

"Have I taken you too greatly by surprise?" she asked, in her sweetest tones. "Oh, Marie, you cannot tell in what haste I have been to reach you. Of all those who call themselves my friends nobody has been like you—so true, so helpful."

The words were so plaintively spoken that they had all the force of an appeal.

Marie frankly took her in her arms and kissed her, and said:

"You could not come too soon, Irmie, only I am sorry papa is not here to give you welcome. He will be home for dinner, however, and it is not long till then."

Ralph, who had been busy with luggage, came forward now that this gush of friendship was a little subsiding, and greeted Mrs. Brevoort.

She took his hand and looked up confidently into

his face, and then, with one swift glance which took him in from head to foot, she said:

"Indeed, Mr. Innesley, I hardly knew you. It is three years, you know, since we have met, and in that time—pardon me—you have much changed."

Now the words were complimentary, or not, as the hearer chose to interpret them, but some indescribable something in her manner conveyed to Ralph a sense that was not altogether pleasing. By this time, however, Marie was ready to show her friend to her room, and, with no farther greeting, the two ladies passed up the staircase and were lost to Ralph's view.

"Well, if I am changed," said Ralph, "so at least is she. Fairer she could scarcely be than she was three years ago, but her charms have certainly ripened into a finer grace. How well she wears her widow's weeds."

Sir Charles Imboden was late to dinner that day. He was a man of great geniality, whose society was much sought after, and, though fifty years of age, and a widower for ten years, he was still a hale and handsome man of the world.

That day, as I have said, he was late to dinner, and, hurrying to his room to get off his riding-gloves and mud-splashed coat, forgot altogether that on this day Marie's guest, her school-day friend, this Mrs. Brevoort, whom he had never seen, was to arrive.

It was, therefore, quite a surprise to him when he entered the dining-room and found the little group standing around the open fire of light wood to see this fair, pale face, set in golden hair, and touchingly illustrated with robes of deepest mourning.

Such angelic loveliness was almost too much for even Sir Charles Imboden's courtly old-school manners, and he bowed with an impressiveness that he was not wont to use except on very rare occasions as his daughter said, with a trace of filial pride in her manner:

"Irmie, this is my father, Sir Charles Imboden—Mrs. Brevoort."

"You are most welcome, madam, to Hazelhurst," said Sir Charles, gallantly; and then, after a few inquiries concerning her journey, they sat down to dinner.

Marie had looked forward with genuine pleasure to this visit from her friend—had planned it, indeed, with the direct intention of soothing her sorrows, restoring her spirits, and lending her such aid as she could toward regaining some sort of independent position in the world.

Mrs. Brevoort had married the rakish, spend-thrift son of a wealthy family; being portionless herself, it had been considered on all sides a most imprudent match, but fortune had favoured her in one sense, for, after a few years of miserable dissensions and recriminations, Aleck Brevoort had suddenly died, leaving his widow entirely dependent upon her father-in-law.

But the senior Brevoort had always been her undisguised enemy, and now cast her off utterly, so that except her wardrobe and jewels she was penniless.

In this strait she had written to Marie for counsel and succour, and Marie, with the quiet but straightforward independence which characterized her, had reasoned that certainly Irmie needed a season of rest and recuperation, after which no doubt she would seek some genteel and honourable method of self-support.

Marie herself had ideas of the way in which this might be done, and proposed after a little to talk them over with her friend, but during this evening after Irmie's arrival Marie began to find herself getting new impressions of her friend's character.

In the first place, during the ten years of his widowhood, Marie had been quite used to seeing her father coquetted with. Usually it amused her.

It seemed to make him feel younger, more buoyant in spirits, to find that young ladies—even very pretty and popular young ladies—did not disdain to display their charms before his eyes, and to be at some pains to awaken his admiration.

If it came to that he could coquet as well as the best of them, and knew, too, all the approved ways and means of ridding himself of a flirtation the moment it became dangerous.

As for Ralph his character had always seemed to Marie too serious for downright flirting, but Mrs. Brevoort's charms seemed to be exerting upon him—as well as upon her father—a very peculiar influence.

They had risen from the table and were grouped about the pleasant fire in the drawing-room, which the autumn chill made very welcome, when Irmie, spying through an open door a stand of blooming plants which were Marie's especial care, burst into an ecstasy of admiration, and drew the whole party after her as she flew to give them closer inspection.

"Oh," she said, "I do so adore flowers. In town it is exceedingly difficult to keep them, unless one can afford the expense of a conservatory. I have made a thousand attempts, but they were all alike failures. Do you know," she said, looking up innocently into Ralph's face, "if I had always flowers I would wear no other ornaments? Nothing else so becomes one."

Sir Charles broke off for her immediately a spray of purple heliotrope, which he presented with his most courtly air; but at the same instant Ralph held out for her acceptance an exquisite tea-rosebud.

She smiled archly at the two gentlemen, and said:

"Which now shall I choose? They are both so charming."

She took the rosebud, and, gathering a geranium leaf, placed them in the soft golden braids of her hair, and, as she had said, it did become her beauty infinitely.

The heliotrope she accepted with less enthusiasm; the truth was it was of too deep a tint to harmonize with her fair but creamy complexion. Nevertheless, she held it in her hand and inhaled its fragrance, but, wearying of it at last, she twined it in Marie's chestnut braids, where for some reason it soon lost its freshness and withered away.

It was a simple incident, such as ordinarily would have passed without exciting a thought; but Marie could not help fancying that during all the rest of the evening Ralph seemed a little elated, and that the shadow of a frown gathered over her father's brow.

"Ah, Marie," said Irmie the next day as they sat alone in Marie's room, a large apartment on the ground floor, open on three sides to the sunshine, and bright with pictures and roses and blooming plants, "ah, Marie, how happy you must be, the idol of this charming home, with every wish gratified, and not a care, not a responsibility in the world!"

"Oh, that is quite a mistake," said Marie. "I have cares in plenty; but then I truly have so much to be thankful for that I strive to bear all burdens patiently and faithfully."

"Yes; but contrast your lot in life with mine. Do you know this feeling that I am a waif, a mere stray in life, with no fixed claim upon any one, makes me as desperate at times as a Bedouin? I think I truly know what Ishmael's curse was:—'His hand to be against every man's, and every man's hand against him.'"

Marie was a little frightened with this kind of talk.

"Why, Irmie," she said, "you used not to feel thus when we were school-girls together."

"No," she said, quite frankly; "I had not come to it then. I had never known what it was to be rich, it is true, but then neither had I ever known that deathly want and craving for money which I have experienced since. My guardian had always been kind to me, and though I often felt lonely, especially when holidays came, and everybody else went home, and I had no home to go to, I was not then wise enough to know what it was to be an orphan with no ties. I tell you, Marie, it is not, as the preachers say, prosperity which is the snare. In my experience, to be prosperous is to be good, or at least to be within easy reach of goodness; but to be poor, that is the temptation."

She was no longer the soft, doll-like creature of the drawing-room, but, rising in a sudden burst of passion, she swept across the floor again and again with a fiery impatience that seemed consuming her.

Then, as if fearful that she had been betrayed or might betray herself beyond forgiveness, she sank down upon a hassock at Marie's feet, and, taking her hand and pressing it to her lips, she said:

"Forgive me, Marie, but if I could not now and then find vent for all these hateful passions I think I should grow wicked at heart. Oh, Marie, you do not know what temptation is."

Marie pitied her. Indeed in all the long and stormy experience which followed she never ceased to pity her; yet nevertheless it was impossible for her equable and sincere mind to contemplate such strong passions in a creature so young, so beautiful, so dear as Irmie without a shiver of distrust.

"Irmie," she said, "do you ever pray?"

"No," said Irmie. "I scarcely think, I believe, that there is a Creator. If there is, and He made the world, He made it very much awry, and I think He must be very much awry Himself. Therefore I just prefer to let the whole thing go, and only believe in chance."

"Why, Irmie," said Marie, "I am shocked."

"No doubt of it," said Irmie, with her softest smile; "but here comes Sir Charles. A truce to theology."

She sprang up with such an innocent and child-like air, and met him with such a cordial, unaffected welcome, that Marie could scarcely believe that it was the same creature who but the moment before had been venting such very impious views.

"Ah," she said, "she is a child; she does not consider."

Her father's face brightened perceptibly as his young friend said, smilingly:

"It was so charming in you to come home and spend an hour with us before dinner."

"Ah," he said, "do not try to deceive me; gray hairs are not so captivating. If Ralph were here you would care little for my presence."

She pouted.

"How can a gentleman of your discrimination be so absurd?" she said. "Mr. Innesley is indeed a very fascinating man"—she said it with such a droll little grimace—"but then to compare him with yourself; that is really too much."

And Sir Charles Imboden, who knew as a general thing what female tactics were, believed this "child" sincere.

But after dinner he had an engagement, and Ralph came into the drawing-room, and, finding the ladies alone, set himself at work to be agreeable.

Marie, from her seat at the centre table, where she was embroidering some trifle for Ralph, watched these two sitting opposite each other before the glowing fire, and thought that it had never before been her privilege to watch a more animated or apparently more earnest flirtation.

In her heart of heart she began to regret having invited Irmie to stay with them.

"It is not that I am jealous," she said, though she confessed to a little pang, "but Ralph is my friend, and I cannot composedly see him throw himself in the way of a woman like that."

In these three days all idea of Irmie ever attempting to support herself had vanished utterly from her mind.

"If coquetry and intrigue can secure her a rich husband, she will marry," thought Marie; "otherwise, she knows better than I, doubtless, what she will do."

Two months passed in this way. Irmie rode one day with Ralph, and smiled on him with her bewitching smile, till in all this world beside there seemed no face so fair.

The next day she sat at Sir Charles's feet and read

to him, till the old man grew desperate and faint-finding, and asked why had not Marie such sweet filial charms as these.

All other women had coquetted with him on level ground, and so he was more than a match for them; but this winning, capricious elf stooped to conquer, and showed thereby that she understood her business.

At last the natural consequences of these double ways ensued, and Marie, quite powerless to prevent it, saw that there was arising a serious coolness between her father and his ward.

One day Ralph took occasion, when Irmie was off for a drive with Sir Charles, to seek Marie alone in her pretty boudoir.

She met him with a glad smile, for it was the first time for many weeks that he had spoken a word with her in private. She saw at once that he was moody and troubled.

"Marie," he said, "I have come to say goodbye."

"Why, Ralph," she replied, "you are not going to leave us?"

"In one sense, yes," he replied, "in another, no. It is a long, a last good-bye, I fear, to all the happy hours I have spent at Hazelhurst, and yet I am going no farther than Hazelton."

"But, Ralph, why do you leave us at all?" asked Marie.

"You must have noticed yourself, Marie, how unpleasant matters are getting here. I once thought Sir Charles Imboden my friend. Indeed, I felt certain that he was a true friend until Irmie came; but I suppose that no one can be expected to bear any good will towards his rival in love."

"Ralph," she said, indignantly, "you do not mean to tell me that my father is in love with Irmie Brevoort?"

"I am sorry to bring you unwelcome news, Marie, but I certainly thought you must have observed it long ago or I should not have ventured."

"Ralph," she said, in a deep and constrained voice, "I know that you were attracted by her, and it seemed to me that papa was quietly trying, for your own sake, to interpose a barrier between you and the object of your infatuation."

He laughed a hoarse, unpleasant laugh.

"He is indeed—forgive me—trying to interpose such a barrier, but his motives are far from being so unselfish as you suppose."

"Ralph, you deceive yourself. Believe me my father is not the man to do so imprudent a thing."

"I see that to convince you I shall be obliged to go farther than I intended, but this is what Irmie herself admitted to me in confidence. She knows that I love her, and she does not look unfavourably upon my affection; but Sir Charles is also a suitor for her hand, and so long as she is under his roof she does not feel free to bestow more favours on any other man than she does on him. She will not even give me a decided answer to my suit, though I do not doubt her love for me. Under these circumstances, you see how impossible it is for me to remain here, and yet it is still more impossible for me to leave the field altogether. So I shall take lodgings in Hazelton, and call here sometimes, at least for old acquaintance' sake."

"And what will be the end of it?" asked Marie, lifting her head from her hands, her white face and pale eyes attesting the pain she felt.

"I cannot tell," said Ralph, moodily. "If I were situated so that it were possible, I would marry Irmie at once, but you know how utterly vain that hope is. In a year I might manage it by hard work, but not sooner."

"Oh, Ralph, dear friend, true brother, do you really love that woman?"

"Marie, she is to me the most bewilderingly beautiful and charming creature I ever saw."

"Yet since she has been here my opinion of her has changed so much."

Ralph smiled in a way that was like a dagger thrust in Marie's heart. She saw that he attributed the change in her feelings to jealousy, and that was an injustice that she could not bear. Neither could she in words repel it.

"Oh," she said, "the false, the faithless woman. I wish she had never come here."

"I do not wonder at your excitement, Marie," said Ralph. "I know how you must regard your father's infatuation, and I confess I hoped that you would see your way clear to propose some change in the situation."

"Ralph," said Marie, with directness, "do you remember telling me, the evening Irmie came here, that she would never take care of herself?"

She was a "shirk," you said—do you remember it?"

"Yes," he said, placidly. "I do not deny the sense of it now. She is too fair, too frail to bear exposure to the rude ills of life. She is a vine-like creature, who must have support or fall to the earth. Oh, if I were only rich!"

He started up with passionate energy, and strode up and down the room for five minutes without speaking.

Marie, meantime, was revolving these new ideas in her mind. She was clear-headed, and it did not take her long to arrive at a conclusion.

"Ralph," she said, "have you told Irmie what your circumstances are?"

"Yes. I told her last evening, and she took it all so sweetly and gently, and professed herself willing to wait indefinitely, if only some proper disposition of her helpless little self could be made meantime."

He smiled in a happy way then, and Marie knew that he was recalling the soft, purring ways and childlike caresses with which she had made these protestations.

"Well, Ralph," she said, "I may be wrong, but I am nevertheless going to hazard this prediction: If, as you say, my father is so infatuated as to be even on the verge of an offer he has made it by this time, and she is his promised wife."

Ralph sprang to his feet then in a rage of passion.

"Marie," he said, "how can you be so cold-hearted—so cruel?"

"Well, there they come," said Marie. "We shall soon have an opportunity of judging."

Ralph looked out of the window and saw Sir Charles, with his most gracious gallantry, hand Irmie from the carriage, and three minutes later that young woman entered the room where Marie and Ralph were.

"Have you enjoyed your drive, Irmie?" said Marie, a little coldly.

"Oh, very much," said Irmie, with equal constraint.

Ralph was looking at her fixedly, for, in spite of his charges against Marie, he could not help fearing that her words might be true.

Irmie crossed the room, and, standing by him, said, in a tone too low for Marie's ears:

"You look distrustful. Tell me that I am not in any way the cause."

"That I could not truthfully," he said.

"Oh, Ralph," she said, most tenderly, "will you ever realize, I wonder, what it is to be placed so unfortunately as I am?"

"Yes," he said, "I so far realize it that I am going to take myself out of your way."

"How?" she cried. "I have not driven you away?"

"No, and yet I am going—at least as far as Hazelton."

She hid her face in her hands.

"Unhappy me!" she sighed, "why was I born?"

"To make me happy some day, I trust," he said, cheered by her seeming grief.

"I cannot forbid you to hope," she said, "and yet I believe I ought."

The bell rang and they all went in to lunch—Ralph happy, cheered, hopeful—Sir Charles Imboden his old polite and gallant self—Mrs. Brevoort demure and charming beyond her wont; Marie only was full of a sadness which no efforts of hers could banish.

When they were about rising from the table Sir Charles Imboden rang the bell and ordered a fresh bottle of wine.

"Champagne," he said to the servant, "the old Cliquet."

When it came he filled all the glasses to the brim, and, rising, said:

"I propose the health of the future mistress of Hazelhurst—Irmie Brevoort that is, Irmie Imboden that soon will be."

The toast was curiously received.

Ralph sat down his glass untasted, and with a low bow and not one word left the room.

Marie fainted.

Sir Charles dashed off his glass at a swallow, and then rang the bell for a servant to attend Marie.

Meantime Irmie drank her wine leisurely.

"I shall need it," she said, "to steady my nerves."

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Six years had passed—years of continual trial and sorrow to Marie.

Ralph had left Hazelton the very day that Sir Charles Imboden had so abruptly announced his engagement, and she had never seen his face or heard directly from him since.

The wedding took place in February; before spring Sir Charles Imboden had begun to realize the force of the old adage which prophesies that they who marry in haste may repent at their leisure.

In a year's time he was fearfully changed. From being always a free liver he grew to be dissipated.

In the second year of her marriage Irmie bore him a son.

He was proud of his boy, and for a season things seemed to mend, but fresh dissensions occurred, old habits resumed their sway, and three years after the birth of his boy he died in a fit of excess.

His will settled Hazelhurst and the larger share of what remained of his fast-flying fortune upon his son.

Marie had her wardrobe and jewels, two thousand pounds in money, and the wide, wide world before her from which to choose a home.

In the last few years she had not been without offers, and eligible ones, but she had steadily refused them all, giving one excuse:

"No one can comfort or control my father as I can. While he lives I must remain where I am."

Now that he was gone it was impossible for her to remain at Hazelhurst.

She packed her trunks, therefore, and, bidding farewell to all her old associations, made her way to London in search of employment. Her heart was heavy and her brain weary.

"Oh," she cried, "if I had but one friend, a brother, a helper of any sort, upon whom I might lean a little, till I could get my feet firmly under me, and so feel equal to my own needs, I should be so thankful."

But she had no one, and at the last she thanked Heaven that she was able to rely upon herself.

Being so friendless, it seemed to her that Providence had an especial care over her.

I cannot trace the steps by which it came about; she had first a few music pupils, and then, after six months' weary and unprofitable labour, she was suddenly and unexpectedly offered a situation as alto singer in the choir of a wealthy but not fashionable church.

She was, therefore, independent, and far happier than she had ever been since the day that Irmieley Brevoort had flitted between her and a great joy.

It was a warm August day. The church of St. Mary's had been closed for six weeks. During all that time, however, she had been in the habit of going there every Saturday evening to meet the organist, and sometimes also the soprano singer, for practice.

These hours had been for her a season of very deep and quiet enjoyment.

The church was cool and still and shadowy—a sacred retreat, it seemed to her, from the heat and turmoil without.

Mr. Williams, the organist, was a fine musician, and his instructions had been of great value to her.

Then, too, the fine old music, the chants and anthems which they practised together, were in themselves a balm and consolation to her heart.

As she wended her way to the church this sultry afternoon to practise the music which was to be used for the opening of the church on the morrow she was conscious of a feeling of sadness that these desultory amateur studies must necessarily come to an end.

Hereafter there must be, in the place of them, laborious effort and a moulding of her style to suit the tastes and oftentimes the whims of her patrons.

The ideal must hereafter be subject to the real, and, however necessary a process this may be, even in order to the truest growth, there are certain souls which always inwardly rebel against it.

When she reached the organ loft she found that, by some mistake in her calculations, she had arrived a half-hour too early, and there was only Mr. Williams there, and he was so deeply absorbed in a grand aria from Beethoven that he did not for a moment notice her entrance.

When at last he did observe her he simply bowed low with a smile of welcome, and went on with his theme.

It seemed to Marie that never before had she felt the full power of music over her heart.

The dim, shadowy church, with here and there a parti-coloured sunbeam streaming across its stillness from the rich stained windows, and lighting up its heavy, sombre architecture, and the high vaulted roof suggesting in some dim way the infinite, the unattainable—furnished no doubt the most fitting scene for those solemn religious strains; and something more was due to her sympathy for the silent, struggling man who sat before her, enjoying the almost solitary pleasure which his burdened life afforded him; but, besides all this, there was in the strains themselves a magic to unlock some hidden springs in her heart.

As she listened tears forced themselves between her closed eyelids, and at last a long, struggling sigh that was half a sob parted her lips.

Mr. Williams paused then, and, holding out his hand to her, said:

"I count it as a good omen that my music can touch your heart. I wish, indeed, that I might make my spoken words equally effective. Miss Imboden, your heart is so tender that I am sure you will not scorn my avowal, however you may chide it. Do you know that in these past few weeks I have learned irrevocably the lesson which all my life long I have dreaded?—dreaded it because I knew that if ever I learned to love any woman it would be with my whole soul, and with a desperate, forlorn strength that would leave me for ever a slave. And I am not a man to have a right to such a love. And yet, Marie, my hour has come, and it is your sweet charms that have vanquished me."

For a moment Marie's heart, softened and impressed by all the subduing influences of the hour, faltered. She had so sincere a respect, so tender a

sympathy for this guileless, hard-pressed, suffering man.

It seemed such an easy thing to do to say, "All that I can give of help and comfort and sympathy is yours," and to take in return this great, soulful passion which he offered, that for a moment, as I say, she wavered.

But in that instant, with clear vision, she pierced far beyond those entangling circumstances, and measured herself and her powers against the world, and against this man as part of it, for she truly recognized that he was not and never could be the world in himself to her; and so her answer when it came was clear and truthful.

"Mr. Williams," she said, "I want you to believe me when I tell you that, though I know men of larger fortune and prouder position, I certainly do not know one from whom an avowal of love could have touched me so deeply and so tenderly. It might not be difficult for me to meet you with something which you would almost fancy was love. But to do that would be to wrong you, for my heart is not my own to give. Neither, if it were, is it now worth the giving. It is simply a shrunken, blighted, dead thing in my bosom. I shall be your friend always, and I trust always worthy of your friendship, which I deeply prize; and after this confession I know you will never ask me for more than this."

He bowed his head upon the key-board for a moment, and when he raised it he was smiling sadly.

"Is it a sorrow or a blessing," he said, "to live as I do a purely ideal life? My burdens are indeed all very real, but my joys are and ever have been ideal. My art is inescapable, insatiable, yet divine; She whom I love is a woman as far removed from me as a star, yet satisfying me by her wisdom and her gentleness as no other human heart was ever satisfied, I think; my very unrest and unhappiness constitute my deepest joys, since they prophesy of Heaven and point the way. Marie, Marie, who shall read aright this tangle, this mystery of human life?"

The singers came in at that moment, and they soon after commenced to practise.

Marie was conscious all the while that a stranger sat in one of the pews below listening, but that was no unusual occurrence.

When the hour was over she lingered for a moment, trying a part in which she did not feel herself quite perfect, and then, gathering several loose sheets of music in her hand, went down the staircase and reached the outer door just as the sexton was waiting to lock it.

A gentleman stood also waiting, but, absorbed in her own thoughts, she did not so much as look at him till a voice which had a strange, familiar note said:

"Marie."

She looked up and met the sad and searching eyes of Ralph Immesley.

Her cheeks flushed, but her voice was very steady as she said:

"Ralph, can it be you?"

"Yes," he said; "may I walk home with you?"

"Certainly," she replied, "if you wish. How did you find me?"

"By chance merely, I fear I must confess. May I ask how you come to be here?"

"Have you not heard?"

"Since I left Hazelhurst I have never mentioned the name of any man or woman whom I knew there."

"Then a very painful duty devolves upon me," she said. Then as delicately and tenderly as she could, and with as little of accusation, she told him the history of Hazelhurst after he had left it. He listened in silence.

At the close he said:

"So my old friend Imboden is dead, and you, Marie, are homeless. Well, time works marvellous changes."

Not one word of Irmieley however was spoken.

Marie's heart grew heavy in her bosom as she remembered that Irmieley was now a widow. She could not believe that Ralph, in spite of all, still cherished a passion for the woman, and yet why did he so resolutely refrain from speaking of her?

When they arrived at Marie's home he took his leave, and she was still in doubt.

Many days followed, during which she heard no word from Ralph.

Never, it seemed to her, had her weary round of teaching seemed so monotonous, never had her weekly study for the choir yielded her so little enthusiasm.

The sight of Ralph's face, the sound of his well-remembered voice, had carried her back to those days of her girlhood when the future had seemed so bright, and when in all its scenes he had seemed to have a rightful share.

The weariness and desolation of her life pressed heavily upon her spirits, and night after night, as she knelt to say her evening prayers, her cry to Heaven was for either strength to bear or rest from bearing.

Often when she closed her eyes, she felt that it would be happiness to know that never in this world should she open them again.

Meantime Ralph was on his way to Hazelhurst. It was a bright September evening when he reached the well-remembered gate which led up the long avenue of lindens.

The place he saw at a glance was not kept up in the old style.

The lawns were neglected, the groves were filled with undergrowth, and the garden arched indeed its old clusters of perennials, but many beds were sadly over-run with weeds.

Upon the lawn the nurse was playing with a handsome boy, the heir of the house. He was a beautiful child, carrying his mother's fair face and golden curls with all the old Imboden pride.

Ralph paused to look at him for a moment, and then passed on.

Upon the verandah he found Irmieley, still wearing her widow's cap, still youthful and charming in appearance.

She was of course greatly surprised to see Mr. Innesley, but her welcome was a most cordial one. Ralph was speedily put in possession of his old room and invited to make himself as perfectly at home as he had been in the olden times. He accepted the invitation, and for two weeks he did little else than study the character of this fair enchantress. Occasionally he felt himself yielding to the old spell, but Ralph had grown wiser from contact with the world than he had been in those early days.

Irmieley for once was puzzled. She was not popular in the county. In fact, many of the most aristocratic families had dropped her altogether. For her son's sake she deeply regretted this, and when Ralph Innesley appeared so suddenly before her she immediately conceived the plan of bringing him again to her feet, in order that through his influence she might rise to popular favour. But Ralph was not easily caught.

Still she said to herself:

"What can have brought him back here, if not at least the memory of his old love?"

The crisis came at last. They were sitting together by the drawing-room fire, just as they had sat on the evening of her arrival at Hazelhurst. Conversation, at first of general import, had at last grown personal, and the tone of it had passed by insensible degrees from friendliness to tenderness.

Irmieley thought that Ralph had grown shy with years. Want of practice too had left the weapons of equestrian a little dull in her hands. She spoke at last with a frankness which years ago she would have called fatuity.

"Ralph," she said, "is it then all over? Have you forgotten utterly the days when only the iron hand of circumstances held back my heart from a loving union with yours?"

"Irmieley," he said, almost sternly, "have you not forgotten?"

"No," she whispered, very faintly, with something of the old-purring softness of manner. "No, Ralph, I shall never forget. You are the only man whom I ever really loved."

She looked up, and was appalled by the gathering sternness of his brows.

"Irmieley Imboden," he said, "I thank you for what you have said. I came here expressly to hear you say it. Years ago, by such arts as you possess, you won away my affections for a season from the greatest woman whom it has ever been my fortune to meet. Marie still lives and I have seen her; but in her pure and noble presence the thought of you and the weak manner in which I had suffered myself to be made your tool was a perpetual reproach to me. I dared not tell her of my love till I should first have cleared my consciousness of the weakness—the folly of my youth. I came back here expressly to try what effect your charms would have upon me now, expressly to see if you, who had robbed me of my self-respect, could not be able to restore the treasure. If the experiment has resulted in a way that is painful and mortifying to you I can only say that I have been merciful compared with yourself. You have only tasted the cup which I drank to the dregs. From this moment I know myself, and am a man."

Irmieley's face was as white as the wall as without a word she rose and left the room.

Marie sat in her own room, dreaming away the twilight hour. After her struggle peace had come, and all the world seemed very large and fair and lovely to her, since over it all brooded the smile of Heaven.

As the rosy hues faded from the sky she seated herself at the piano, and in a sweet and plaintive voice sang. So absorbed was she in her song, which came truly from her heart as a prayer, that she did not hear the door behind her as it silently swung on its hinges.

The hymn was an old favourite; she and Ralph had often practised it together in the music-room of Hazelhurst, and it seemed to her like an echo of



the past when Ralph's voice joined hers again and carried on the grand full theme to the close.

She turned, and he stood before her—not the equivocal being who had visited her some weeks ago, but the veritable Ralph of the olden time. Instinctively she knew that all of doubt and misapprehension was for ever at an end between them, and for a moment she could not speak.

"Mario," he said, "I have seen Irmie since I saw you. She is the same fair serpent that she used to be, but she has no longer any power to charm me. The love which was always yours I can offer you now without any distrust. Will you accept it?"

I am not sure what her answer was, but I know that before Christmas they were married in the church of St. Mary, and that Mr. Williams furnished the music for the occasion.

It was said that never before had harmonies so divine flowed from that noble organ; but, grand as they might be, they could no more than symbolize the harmony of those two hearts and lives which then and there were blended into one.

J. W.

### FACTIÆ.

WHAT coin should last longest? One's last shilling.—*Fun.*

A SLATE LOOSE.—When you order a ton of coals from your coal merchant, and receive "slates," send 'em to the nearest School Board.—*Fun.*

GOING A CRUPPER!

Furious Farmer: "You careless blockhead! You've bin and throwed him down!"

Indignant Waggoner: "Noa, I did'n'—crupper broke, and let 'un fall!"—*Fun.*

LIKES HIS MONEY'S WORTH!

English Passenger (by the Night Mail North): "Confounded tedious journey this!"

Scotch Ditto: "Tajious! Sae it ought to be! (With a Groan.) Two pan twalve and sarpence, second class—manet's l.—*Punch.*

CATECHISM UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

Free Kirk Elder (preparatory to presenting a Tract): "My friend, do you know the chief end of man?"

Piper (innocently): "Na, I dunna mind the chune! Can ye no whistle it?"—*Punch.*

MAY AND DECEMBER.—At this present junction Mrs. Malaprop is greatly interested in a marriage which is about to take place between two of her most intimate friends. The only drawback to her satisfaction is that she is afraid there is too great a disparagement of age.—*Punch.*

WANTON WASTE.

First Scotchman: "Hae ye bin, to see this International Yit, John?—it's a bonny sight, mon, weel worth the money!"

Second Scotchman: "The inside of it? oh, ay! I bin once. The sight was bonnie! but ay, mon, it was ene gane ye ken! and, so was the shillie! I an, to think too, I could ha' seen it noo for sarpence! Heigh!"—*Fun.*

"I AM SIR ORACLE."—The Rev. F. Cope, incumbent of Christ Church, Leamington, has been fallen foul of by another of his own cloth, the Rev. J. Craig, who instructed his attorney to serve a writ of inhibition on Mr. Cope, forbidding the head master of Rugby to preach in his pulpit. From the newspaper accounts it seems that there was almost a row in the church, as the man of law served his legal process within the walls. The Bishop of Worcester, on being appealed to, very wisely stopped this little piece of ecclesiastical bullying, and decided that Mr. Craig has no power of attorney to meddle with other people's pulpits. We shall style this case, in the event of the threatened legal steps being taken, "Worcester Sauce; or, the Craig in the See and the Leamington Spar."—*Punch.*

A NICE SUM.

"The Excise duty on Wine and Sweets, in the year ended the 31st of March, last, was 193,842, 17s. 4d."

What can these "sweets" be? Trifle and tippycake, blanc-mange and custard, are largely consumed by the upper and middle classes of this country, and a tax upon these and similar cakes would realize a considerable sum, and possibly enable the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take the burdens off humbler articles of food; but we never heard that the Excise interfered with the manufacture of the sweets which appear on our dinner and supper tables, or lavied any duty on such dainty dishes. Can it be that these popular articles of consumption, known as "sweets" in our younger days, contribute to the revenue! It cannot. No Chancellor of the Exchequer could be so hard-hearted—so completely forgetful of the manner in which he spent most of his income in early life—as to tax barley-sugar and bull's eyes, tarts and toffy. We can recall no other "sweets"

but those we have mentioned as likely or unlikely to be taxed (except the sweets of office); and as this is the vacation, and no question can be raised in the House on the subject, it must be left in the obscurity in which it was found.—*Punch.*

DRAWING THE LINE.

"Ladies' United Service Club, for Widows, Wives, and Daughters of Officers of the Army and Navy. Age of admission not to exceed 80."

Why this cruel restriction to "thirty-nine"? Why exclude forty—dear "fat, fair, and forty"? Mr. Punch, who has thousands of admirers of the only sex worth thinking about, who, he fears, will never see thirty-nine again, pauses for a reply, and will only wait a certain time for an answer. At its expiration he intends to "apply personally" for particulars at the address indicated in the advertisement, and if the explanation as to this preference for the figure "80" (can it have any reference to the Articles?) is not satisfactory, he will at once "promote" a rival club with no limitation of age.—*Mr. Punch* gives no such assurance as to capital—where forty will be as welcome as thirty, and fifty as forty, where youth, and age, and "a certain age" will all be equally admissible for ballot; where, in a word, no one connected with the management will ever be so indiscreet as to ask any questions at all on such a delicate point as a lady's age. Mr. Punch would like to know how many of the candidates for admission to the "Ladies' United Service [? Matrimony] Club" will be found, on their own confession, to be thirty-nine!—*Punch.*

### COMMON FOLKS.

THE man who earns with honest labour

The daily bread his nature needs

Is not "beneath" his lordly neighbour

The golden spoon of fortune feeds.

The human heart beats like a tabor

When a good life is crowned with deeds.

All Nature's forces work together,

The winds and waters, sun and shade,

The change of seasons and the weather,

To aid the man of toil and trade;

Good luck and hope, birds of a feather,

Sing near his cot their serenade.

On farm and wild, where flocks are bleating,

In shop and mill, and forge and shed,

Wherever honest hearts are beating,

Where there is work of hand or head,

The Common Folks find honour greeting,

And blessings with their daily bread.

Fair Nature is the loving mother

Of all the race, though stained with sin;

The peasant is the prince's brother,

The lackey to the king is kin;

Parchments and titles cannot smother

True manhood deeper than the skin.

The ocean tides are ever flowing,

The restless winds the waves embroll;

The modest grass is ever growing,

Greening in every clime the soil;

The sun and stars, for ever glowing,

Teach us to trust in Heaven and toil.

G. W. D.

### GEMS.

WE are willing to look on antiquity as superior to our time, but not on posterity. It is only a father that does not envy the son.

He who combats his own evil passions and desires enters into the severest battle of life; and if he combats successfully obtains the greatest victory.

KNOWLEDGE is a common and unappropriable property of mankind, a ray of heavenly light which streams through the darkness of the night.

IMITATIONS please, not because they are mistaken for realities, but because they bring realities to mind.

PAINTING and sculpture, next to poetry, constitute the grand medium by which the sublimest ideas and the most exquisite sensations are conveyed to the human mind.

THE opponents of any idea founded on reason and common sense are like men striking among live coals. They may scatter them, but only to make them kindle and blaze spots which otherwise they would never have touched.

### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FRENCH MUSTARD.—3 oz. salt, 2 oz. scraped horse radish, 1 clove of garlic, 1 quart boiling vinegar. Let them remain mixed for twenty-four hours; strain and mix with flour of mustard as required.

PRESERVING SALMON IN TINS.—Salmon is pro-

served in tins in much the same way as other provisions. The tins are filled with the fish, the lids soldered on with a small hole in them. They are then placed in a bath of chloride of calcium, raised to the proper temperature, and when the air is excluded from the tins a drop of solder closes the hole in the lid. Lobster is preserved in a similar way.

TO MAKE PRESERVED GINGER OF LETTUCE STALKS.—Put the quantity of lettuce stalk that you wish to preserve in salt and water for four or five days, changing it every day; make a syrup of one pound of sugar, one pint of water, quarter of a pound of ginger, with the peel of one lemon, the white of an egg; boil till clear, which must be done three times a week for three weeks; wipe the stalks quite dry, and pour the syrup over, boiling. This preserve, if well tied down in jars, and kept in a dry place, will keep four or five years.

### STATISTICS.

HEALTH OF WATERING PLACES.—The Registrar General gives in his Quarterly Return the usual statement of the (annual) rate of mortality in the second quarter of the year 1872 in the districts or sub-districts of England, comprising and approximately representing the watering-places:—In Ramsgate the rate of mortality was as low as 11.7 per 1,000 living, Leamington 11.9, Eastbourne 12.3, Folkestone 12.9, Hove 13.9, Lowestoft 13.9, Worthing and Littlehampton 14.6, Sidmouth 14.8, Dawlish and Teignmouth 15.2, Hastings and St. Leonard's 15.5, Tenby 15.6, Weymouth 15.8, Southend 16.1, Cheltenham 16.3, Isle of Wight 16.4, Torquay 16.5, Clifton (with part of Bristol) 16.5, Tunbridge Wells 16.7, New Brighton 16.9, Harrogate 17.6, Buxton 17.7, Lifford 17.8, Brighton 17.8, Yarmouth 18.1, Bangor and Beaumaris 18.1, Scarborough 18.5, Blackpool 19.1, Aberystwyth 19.1, Exmouth 19.5, Weston-super-Mare 20.2, Penzance, Marazion, and St. Ives 20.6, Malvern 20.9, Llandudno 21.1, Rhyl 21.2, Bath 21.4, Margate 22.5, Hove Bay 22.6, Southport 23.7, Matlock 24.3, Whitby 24.3, Anglesey 27.5, Dover 35.6. There is also a statement of the quarter's mortality from the seven principal zymotic diseases—small-pox, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping-cough, fever, diarrhoea. In Buxton there were no deaths from these diseases, in the districts or sub-districts containing the following places less than 1.0 per thousand living:—Horne Bay, Hastings and St. Leonard's, Weymouth, Sidmouth, Bangor and Beaumaris, New Brighton, Harrogate, Malvern, and Leamington.

### MISCELLANEOUS.

THE GATES OF CONSTANTINOPLE.—The ancient gates of Constantinople, which endured the attacks of decay for more than 1,100 years, were made of Cypress wood.

FIRST ICE HOUSE IN ENGLAND.—"Oct. 22nd, 1660. A snow house and an ice house made in St. James's Park, as the mode is in some parts of France and Italy and other hot countries, for to cool wines and other drinks for the summer season."—(Add. MSS. in Brit. Mus.)

A COUNTY FARMERS' UNION.—In Kent the farmers are establishing a "County Farmers' Union, for the purpose of taking combined action in self-defence, and to protect the non-union labourers from intimidation." This step, it is stated, has been taken in consequence of "the threatening aspect presented by the Agricultural Labourers' Union."

SIR WILLIAM WALLACE'S SWORD.—A curious fact has just come to light in connection with the alleged Wallace Sword in Dumbarton Castle. It would appear that some months ago the Grampian Club, through their secretary, applied to the War Minister to obtain the sword for the Wallace Monument on the Abbey Craig, near Stirling, that it might there be exhibited to visitors. A reply has been received from the War Office stating that the late Duke of Wellington owned the sword to be examined in 1825, and that it was found to belong to the period of Edward I., and to have been in all probability used by that monarch when he entered Chester in state in 1255. The result is that Mr. Cardwell has given instructions that the sword at Dumbarton Castle should no longer be exhibited as that of Sir William Wallace. That such an order was not issued in 1825, when the discovery was made of the real character of the weapon, may probably be ascribed to an amiable wish on the part of the authorities of that period not to wound the susceptibilities of the Scottish nation; but the postponement of the revelation, which will now come as a rude shock to our northern neighbours, was really an act of cruel kindness, since it led to another fifty years' expenditure of fervent patriotic emotion over a weapon which, instead of being a genuine relic of Wallace, was the sword of an English king, and an Edward to boot.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**POLLY.**—1. Your handwriting is not bad, but requires care. 2. Colour of hair light-brown.

**R. A. L.**—"Ah, Rest" is declined. The idea is pretty, but the execution exhibits a deficiency in the art of expression.

**S. K. R.**—Your jingles, "The Rose" and "Memory," are unfitted for print. Clearly for poetry—nay, even rhyming—you have no vocation.

**V. R.**—The estimated cost of the Autumn Manoeuvres was 130,000*l.* exclusive of the money paid in the way of compensation.

**CURTIS.**—A new penny piece of the present bronze coinage exactly represents the French postal weight of one-third of an ounce.

**EMBARRASSED ONE.**—The circumstances are so peculiar, and the information you submit to us is so slight, that we are unable to advise you. Consult a solicitor.

**MARY.**—Shred fine into a bottle half an ounce of wax, pour on a quarter of a pint of turpentine; let them stand all night, then add a pennyworth of wood naphtha and the same of spirit of hartshorn. This mixture with little trouble will impart a good polish to furnitures.

**VIVACIOUS.**—1. The colour of the hair is dark-brown. The features represented in the photograph are in our opinion decidedly pretty, and, we think, are indicative of both amiability and intellectuality. 2. Handwriting very good.

**IGNORAMUS.**—1. They are generally understood to have been "The Temple at Ephesus," "The Labyrinth of Crete," "The Colossus of Rhodes," "The Sphinx," "The Hanging Garden of Babylon." 2. By an effort of the will alone. 3. Use a good pomade.

**RICHARD S., A SAILOR.**—After careful perusal we must decline "The Sailor Boy in his Watch," "A Stirring Hurrah," etc., as not being quite up to our standard. "My Old Messmate" and "On the Laying Down another Monster Ironclad" shall receive due consideration.

**PABST.**—The best works on the art are, without doubt, "Cooley's" Encyclopedia, or Dr. Ure's book, but they are both expensive. You may obtain either through a bookseller, or in all probability will meet with them in the public library nearest to your residence.

**A CONSTANT READER.**—There are many disinfecting compounds. Amongst them we can point to no better than "Cooley's disinfecting fluid," and "Sir William Bennett's," either of which may be procured at almost any oil-shop, and will, if used in the washing water, serve to disinfect the clothes.

**H. S. L.**—1. You can obtain a lactometer, or milk tester. Any dealer in glass on your island would procure one for you. 2. There have been several treatises published, an excellent one is to be found in Cooley's Encyclopedia of Practical Receipts. 3. Any dealer in your island will procure an apparatus for you from London.

**CHOWAN-CH TOWNE.**—The ideas contained in the two poems "A Young Sailor's Watch Dreams" and "A True Experience" are very pretty, but require more care and thought in the expression; both metre and rhyme are alike imperfect, which doubtless our correspondent by careful revision may correct.

**CURIOUS.**—1. An earth which abounds in the Mendip Hills. 2. It would not be safe for a human being to use it internally. 3. It is a powerful emetic but rarely used now. You had better avoid it. 4. "Cooley's," or "Sir William Bennett's," disinfecting fluid, which you can purchase with full directions at any oil and colour shop or large grocer's.

**IRISH WORKING BOY.**—There are plenty of vacancies for boys in the Royal Navy. In England, with the consent of your parents, it would be easy enough, supposing you could pass the surgeon's examination, to get admitted on board the training-ships at Portland. Doubtless there are similar training-ships in Ireland. You should write to your local newspaper, the editor of which would give you every information.

**JUPITER.**—Those portions of the skin most exposed to the air or sun have generally a browner shade than other parts of the body; the best perfumers are soap and water, followed by the use of a coarse but not hard cloth, and the beautifiers are health, exercise, and good temper; in your case perhaps the occasional use of a little Goulard's lotion might be useful, it tends to impart a delightful softness to the skin.

**DAVID G.**—1. Use dumb bells for a quarter of an hour each morning on leaving your bed, and ever keep in mind the military rule "chest forward." If you have a strong will you will thus effect a cure. 2. Apply to a dentist to stop your tooth or teeth. If you cannot afford to pay a

dentist's fee, you can obtain advice at any hospital, and probably relief. 3. We cannot advise you how to stop "palpitation of the heart." You should take medical advice.

**QUEEN GUINEVERE.**—1. The qualifications and age for the companion to a lady would depend upon the tastes and rank in life of the lady requiring such an associate. To fulfil the duties properly they certainly should in most things assimilate. 2. As to holidays, that of course would be a matter of arrangement. 3. Whether a situation of the kind be desirable depends chiefly upon the disposition and temper of the party requiring it. 4. There are many first-class governess agencies in London, at any one of which you might by paying a small preliminary fee, with the contingency of a percentage upon the first year's salary, obtain such a situation; generally, however, when not obtained by private recommendation, it is by advertising or answering advertisements. 5. Handwriting susceptible of improvement; it is too careless and full of flourishes.

**JOSEPH S.**—1. To prepare small birds place the specimen on its back—the head towards you; break the wing-bones near the body, next separate the breast feathers carefully and make an incision along the medial line from chest to vent; having done which, turn back the skin, and raise the bird to a perpendicular position, resting it on the vent. Now skin round the chest, cut through the neck, windpipe, and gullet; detach the wings from the body, and remove; skin all down the back to the thighs; then push the thighs through, at the same time carefully drawing off the skin, after which, having cut the tendons remove the muscle of the thigh in one piece, leaving the bone clean. The next operation is to turn back the skin of the head with care, so that the eyes and ears may not be injured; cut away the back part of the skull with neck, tongue, and palate; remove the brain and eyes. Having taken away all fat and flesh, dress the skin with arsenical soap, bind tow in place of the muscles on the bones, and return them to their places. It is not desirable to use powdered alum to birds' skins, as it tends to make them brittle. 2. Fish may be preserved after the same manner.

## NEW FACES AND OLD.

At all times and in all places  
What a sea of human faces  
Meet us, greet us, day by day,  
As we tread our beaten way!

Some are faces full of care,  
Some are plain and some are fair!  
Some are tender, some are cold,  
Some are modest, others bold.

But the face that troubles me  
More than any that I see  
Is the child face full of sadness,  
That should portray only gladness.

Little faces come and go,  
Pouched with poverty and woe,  
In and out the busy throng,  
Never singing childhood song!

As life's moments swiftly roll  
How these faces haunt the soul!  
May they, when all hearts are tried,  
Shine as do the glorified!

M. A. K.

**J. W. asks us:**—"If a lady be engaged to be married and afterwards wishes to break the engagement, can the gentleman possibly prevent her marriage with another, he not wishing the engagement to be broken?" As we shrewdly expect that "J. W." is or has been the cause of the lady's jilting, or desire to jilt her fiancé, we may inform him that although the gentleman cannot prevent her marriage with another he can bring an action of breach of promise of marriage against the lady, which in this case we think she would richly deserve. Faith is no more to be broken upon the one side than on the other.

**A. F.**, twenty, 5ft. 9in., rather good looking, would like to marry a young lady about eighteen, and with a little money.

**BENJAMIN**, twenty, dark complexion, wishes to marry a young lady about eighteen, must be well educated and fond of music.

**C. L.**, twenty-one, rather tall, fair, loving, domesticated, fond of home; would like to correspond with one who would make a good husband.

**ELLEN**, twenty, tall, dark-brown hair, hazel eyes, and very domesticated. Respondent must be about twenty-four, tall, and good looking; a mechanic preferred.

**TED G.**, twenty, average height, fair complexion, blue eyes, and well able to keep a wife; she must be about seventeen or eighteen, and fond of home.

**JOSEPH S.**, twenty-two, 5ft. 7in., dark hair and eyes, and a mechanic. Respondent must be about twenty, domesticated, and fond of home.

**LIZZIE B.**, eighteen, average height, light hair, blue eyes, fair complexion, loving and musical. Respondent must be tall, dark, handsome, well educated, and not over twenty-five.

**ISABELLA**, twenty-one, tall, rather stout, good tempered, of a loving disposition, and considered good looking. Respondent must be about twenty-four, a tradesman preferred.

**T. THOMSON**, eighteen, 5ft. 5in., a seaman, dark eyes and hair, fair complexion, would like to marry a young woman about the same age, who would make a loving wife.

**AMELIA**, twenty-one, brown hair, dark eyes, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be a good-looking young man, fond of home, who would make a loving husband.

**C. D.** wishes to marry a gentleman who has a moderate income and is of a very religious turn of mind. He must not be under twenty-five. "C. D." is of medium height, has dark curly hair and blue eyes, and would make a very loving wife.

**MABEL**, twenty-six, medium height, blue eyes, dark hair, domesticated, affectionate, and in receipt of a moderate income, wishes to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-eight or thirty, must be good looking

(dark), affectionate, fond of home, and in comfortable circumstances.

**ELIZA**, nineteen, rather tall, considered pretty, and domesticated. Would like to marry a tall young man, not more than twenty-three, and of a kind, loving disposition; a clerk preferred.

**WILLIAM B.**, twenty-six, good looking, in a good position, and fond of music; would make a loving husband. Respondent must be about twenty-two, good looking, and fond of home and music.

**LEISA**, twenty-one, 5ft. 4in., gray eyes, fair complexion, very loving, and fond of music. Respondent must be about twenty-four, fond of home and children; a clerk preferred.

**CAROLINE**, twenty, tall, fair, light hair, blue eyes, very loving, and domesticated, wishes to marry a young man about twenty-two, who is loving and fond of home; a tradesman preferred.

**LOVING LIZZIE**, twenty, medium height, dark-brown hair and eyes, very affectionate, and fond of home. Respondent must be about twenty-five, a tradesman preferred.

**CAPTAIN**, forty, in command of a ship in the China trade. Respondent must be affectionate and intelligent; a little money, though not essential, would be of service to him.

**DOWN HEARTED ALF**, twenty-one, tall, fair, good-humoured, steady, and in a good position. Respondent must be dark, well educated, and respectably connected.

**A. B.** wishes to marry a gentleman of dark complexion, in receipt of a good income, and in possession of a loving heart. "A. B." has dark hair and eyes, is medium height, and of a very loving disposition.

**ALICIA**, twenty-two, medium height, very fair, curly hair, loving, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be loving, and not over twenty-six; a tradesman preferred.

**JANE**, twenty-four, rather tall, fair complexion, and in a good position. Respondent must be dark, blue eyes, affectionate, fond of home, music, and children, must not be over twenty-one.

**HENRY C. B.**, twenty-eight, 5ft. 7in., dark hair, a musician, who in consequence of an accident he met with at sea has the misfortune to use crutches, would wish to correspond with a young woman or widow.

**JENNIE**, twenty-one, an orphan, tall and dark, considered attractive, and with an income of two pounds per week, and fond of home, wishes to correspond with a young gentleman who has a good salary.

**C. S. M.**, twenty-five, 5ft. 10in., fair, light-blue eyes, well educated, sober, and industrious. Respondent must be tall, dark, and handsome, from eighteen to twenty-two, loving, intelligent, and a Protestant; a domestic servant in Belfast preferred.

**AMY** and **ALICE**, "Amy" nineteen, medium height, fair, hazel eyes, and of a loving disposition. "Alice", nineteen, dark hair, and blue eyes. Respondents must be tall, dark, loving, fond of home, and in a respectable position.

**JOSEPHINE M.**, nineteen, medium height, fair, pretty, domesticated, fond of home and children, and would make a loving wife. Respondent must be about twenty-two, fair, handsome, in a good situation, and affectionate.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

**LOVELY TRADESMAN** is responded to by—"Annie," who would assist him in re-embarking in business; fair, medium height, would make an affectionate and industrious wife, between thirty and forty.

**HECTOR** by—"A Lonely One," eighteen, rather tall, fair, laughing blue eyes, and dark-brown hair.

**FABRY** by—"F. W.," 5ft. 11in., fair, considered handsome, with an income of 300*l.* per annum.

**ETHEL** by—"Hamilton," twenty-three, tall, dark, well educated, and in a comfortable position.

**ELIZA W. by—"Vulcan,"** twenty-five, 5ft. 7in., dark complexion, dark hair and eyes, loving, and a mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**A LOVER OF SAILORS** by—"George Tar Brush," in the Royal Navy, 5ft. 5in., golden hair, dark complexion, good looking, fond of home, children and music.

**FRUIT W. by—"Ellen C.,"** nineteen, thoroughly domesticated, having kept her father's house for three years.

**CHARLES** by—"Happy Harry," thirty-five, blue eyes, dark-brown hair and moustache, fond of home and music, loving, and holds a good situation as an engineer.

**SAMUEL H. by—"Fanny,"** twenty-five, middle height, fair hair and complexion, gray eyes, a good cook and also manager of a household. She would not like to marry any gentleman under thirty-five years of age. She is at present, and has been during the last eight years, earning a fair salary as governess in an institution.

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